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FOUR-IN-HAND



"I lost my hat. It blew into the field."

(See page 47.)

FOUR-IN-HAND

A STORY OF SMART LIFE IN NEW
YORK AND AT A COUNTRY CLUB

BY

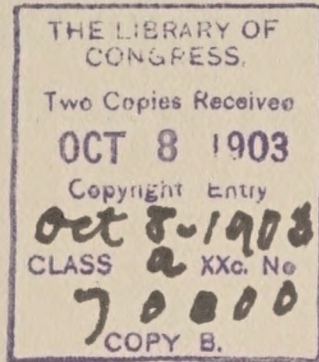
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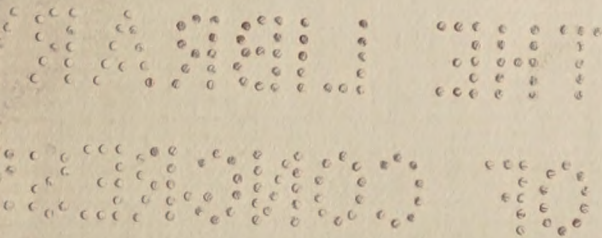
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FOUR-IN-HAND

CHAPTER I

IN WHICH THE BUGGY DOES NOT ARRIVE

“No, ma’am. No hacks are allowed at this station. You’d ought to have got off at the village if you wanted a hack. Nobody gets off here except they’re going to the Club House or the cottages. There’s the stage. You can go to the Club in that.”

“I don’t wish to go to the Club,” said Mrs. Foster, severely. “The conductor assured me that I should find carriages at this station as well as the other, and——”

“The stage will take you as far as the Club House,” the brass-buttoned functionary repeated with equal sternness. “It’s ready to start now, but no hacks is ever allowed.”

Mrs. Foster glanced about the tiny station, gabled and peaked, and disfigured by no enlightening, if vulgar, sign, at the new stone

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gateway and keeper's lodge across the road, at the empty track gliding off into the thick fog, and finally at the neat black vehicle provided for the convenience of the members of the Fortmounthouse Country Club, into which half a dozen people had already climbed. Her heart was filled with resentment, for certainly her brother should have sent some one to meet her, after directing her to get out at the inconvenient new station. It was nearly six o'clock, and the air was damp and raw. Did they expect her to wait on the platform all the evening? She could not even take a train back to the old station before eight o'clock, and the fog was growing thicker. "Ask the stage-driver," she commanded, "if he can not drive me to Mr. Fenwick's, on the Milford road. Tell him I will pay anything in reason, but that I must get there at once." While the station-master delivered her message she stood near the stage, check in hand, awaiting the result of the interview. She was rightly served, she reflected indignantly, for not having sooner detected the hand of her grandniece Effie in the arrangement which had placed her in this dilemma. Who but Effie would have urged her to dismount at this stronghold of frivolity, so that,

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instead of rolling comfortably in a hack toward her brother's house, with a good cup of tea in prospect, and a speedy opportunity of rearranging her limp gray puffs, she was stranded in a place from which escape seemed improbable, and reduced to the plight of begging favors from a surly driver.

"He says," the station-master informed her, "that his orders are to drive nowhere but to the Club, and he don't want to get into trouble with the Governing Committee."

"Then what am I to do?" Mrs. Foster demanded accusingly.

"I'm sure I don't know, ma'am," said the unsuccessful go-between. "Now then, please stand out of the way. The trunks are coming."

Mrs. Foster, turning with the abruptness of despair, collided with a tall man in a heavy mackintosh, who was making for the stage door. The station-master followed her, expostulating with an added zeal at sight of the newcomer, to whom he touched his hat.

"I beg your pardon, madam. I trust I didn't hurt you," said the tall man. "What's the matter, Harkins?"

"Well, sir," said the station-master, "the

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lady has come to the wrong place, and I've just been telling her that the stage ain't for general use, nor hawking 'round the back roads."

"If I could get a hack—" the luckless Mrs. Foster recommenced, feeling the presence of one in authority.

"I've just been telling her," the fluent Harkins interpolated, "that as for expecting the stage to go around in a general way for people as ain't members, why, I——"

"Yes, yes, of course," said the tall man wearily, and turned once more to Mrs. Foster. "Where do you wish to go?"

"To Mr. George Fenwick's," she answered, grasping her check and pocketbook with renewed hope.

"If you don't object to going by way of the Club House, the stage can take you there," said her deliverer. "Have you any luggage? Harkins, see that this lady's trunk is put with the others."

"Well, Mr. Percival, I'm sure you told me yourself, sir—" Harkins began, but stopped in disappointment, seeing that his protest fell upon deaf ears, Mr. Percival being at that moment employed in helping Mrs. Foster into the stage. As he gave a few hurried directions to

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the driver, the station-master went about his business, muttering maledictions on the inconsistencies of the Governing Committee.

Inside the stage, which began to move at a smart pace through the gates and up a slight ascent of fine macadamized road, were four ladies, a round-faced, highly colored young man, two young women who sat near the door with an air of seeing nothing, and Mrs. Foster's deliverer, who paid no further attention to her, but whom she now regarded with disapprobation. The two lamps which lighted the vehicle revealed his strong, rather irregular features, the decided curve of his lips, and his long, indifferent, greenish-gray eyes. She knew him well enough, both by sight and reputation, and regretted her indebtedness to him, even for a trifling civility. It is true that he showed no disposition to take advantage of the service he had rendered her, but promptly turned his back upon her, and began to talk to his nearest neighbor, a woman with a profile like a cameo, and beautiful with a brilliant and undeniable loveliness. Mrs. Foster recognized this lady also, and pursed up her lips. Presently the stage stopped, and a man in corduroys and muddy leggings climbed in and

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tumbled past Mrs. Foster to join the others. "Hello! You here?" he exclaimed, shaking hands with everybody. "Nobody told me you were coming. I'm awfully glad to see you. I've just been for a turn around the Polo Grounds—nothing else to do—but the mud is knee-deep. How are you, Mrs. Trevor? How are the old man and the boy?"

"Mr. Trevor declines to come until to-morrow," said the beauty, "and I dare not take the baby into the country in this raw, cold weather. We are only here for the week-end, just for a little rest."

"Well, you will find it here," said the new arrival.

"Come, now, Dickman, don't discourage them, or they will be for taking the next train back to town," cried the round-faced young man. "Here's Mrs. Townshend, whose idea of rest is pursuing innocent men and inducing them to take charge of her Boys' Clubs, and——"

"Bobby, you are absurd," the subject of his remarks interrupted conclusively. She was a large, fair, handsome young woman in severely tailored garments, and seemed to radiate capability. "Isn't it dreadful, though, Mr. Dick-

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man, to see such an avalanche of women with never a husband among them? Mr. Townshend is in Washington, Mr. Trevor is on his way back from Indian River, and Mr. Beverly is in Boston."

"And Mr. Percival, we believe, is in Purgatory," said Bobby Floyd in a loud whisper, screening his indiscretion from the ears of the well-preserved matron in the corner. "No, Aunt Louise can't hear me. She is taking her forty winks, as usual. Did you think I meant you, Sidney?"

"I certainly did, uncomplimentary as it may be considered by my fellow sufferers," said Percival. "I insist upon telling my wrongs. I am cold and wet and hungry and sleepy, and I wish Percy Townshend would come home and go about with his own wife. What peace is there in life, when your cousins not only get socialism in a rabid form themselves, but must needs inoculate you with it? Last night Mrs. Townshend took me to a shocking place on Thirty-fourth Street to hear a man named Kendal slang us for having any money to begin with, and then assure us that we couldn't whitewash our sinful souls even by giving it away. When we came out it was snowing, and

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she insisted on walking home, and then wouldn't go anywhere to supper."

"He said he had a fifteen-dollar thirst, whatever that may be," said Mrs. Townshend, "and I wouldn't encourage it."

"And now she drags me to the country."

"On the contrary, I advised your staying in town," said Mrs. Townshend.

"Yes, and going to somebody or other's Lenten sewing-class to hear that Parlor Prophet again. At least there's nothing of that sort here."

"Who's at the Club?" Bobby Floyd inquired.

"The Melvilles, some Baltimore people looking at cottages, and my sister's boy—the one who's just been expelled from Harvard," said Mr. Dickman with beautiful frankness. "Awful cub he is. They're turning him out to grass for a while."

"They had a big kick-up there, didn't they?" Mr. Floyd remarked, meaningly. Mrs. Trevor flushed and turned her shoulder to the speaker.

"I suppose he will tell the whole story next," she said impatiently to Percival. She spoke so low that Mrs. Foster could not catch

THE BUGGY DOES NOT ARRIVE

her words, but she could hear Percival make some consolatory reply, and observe that they continued to talk confidentially while Mr. Floyd expatiated upon the details of the scandal, condemning the faculty for undue harshness. "And they might at least have considered who it was, you know," he concluded severely, as the stage swung into an open oval with a row of brightly lighted windows facing upon it, and backed up to a flight of shallow steps leading to a broad veranda. Liveried servants appeared at the door, and the new arrivals scrambled out, the two maids going last with an air of self-effacement. Mrs. Foster was seized with a sudden panic. Perhaps after all she would be able to proceed no farther. But she was reassured by the fact that her trunk was not among those which were tumbled off the roof, and she presently found herself being whirled downhill again at a very rapid pace, and out by another gate, over the dark little cross-road which led to her brother's house. The road was heavy and uneven, and the good lady was jolted from side to side, like a solitary penny in an iron bank. When the stage finally came to a halt where a large lantern on a post shed a yellow gleam over a

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wooden gate and a board walk in need of repairs, Mrs. Foster heaved a sigh of relief and alighted from her vehicle. As she picked her way down the steps the front door burst open, and two boys rushed out, followed by a young girl. There was a chorus of surprise and dismay when the young people beheld the conveyance from which their guest descended alone. "Why, where's Archie?" cried one. "Didn't the buggy meet you?"

"I'll bet he's upset somewhere," another exclaimed, while the youngest boy observed with a wicked grin, "I told him he couldn't drive that black horse!"

Mrs. Foster paid the driver, who, with the assistance of the two boys, had deposited her trunk on the walk, and allowed herself to be escorted back to the house, her grand-niece explaining to her almost tearfully as she went that Archie had started in ample time to meet her at the new station; that he had hired a buggy because the roads were so bad; that he must have met with some accident—excuses which Mrs. Foster accepted grimly, remarking: "Yes; I might have expected some such performance."

Mr. Fenwick stood in the door, quite un-

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perturbed by her perfectly audible strictures on his domestic government. His hair was grizzled, and his small blue eyes were keen and humorous. "Well, Katherine," he said, "I'm glad to see you. The children intended to meet you in state, but no doubt you were more comfortable in the stage than sitting in a puddle on the back road with Archie. I'll have your trunk sent up and you'll make yourself at home. No doubt supper will be ready in a few moments. Ask our little housekeeper here."

"Oh, yes, whenever Aunt Katherine wants it," said Effie, feeling that her aunt was regarding her with quite unmerited disapproval.

"Don't feel called upon to wait for me, George," said Mrs. Foster, with crushing self-abnegation.

"Nonsense! Take your time," said her brother. "We don't break our necks to sit down on the minute."

"I will take your lamp for you," said Effie, leading the way up-stairs. "And I hope you will excuse Archie. I am sure something dreadful must have happened to him, or he would certainly have met you."

CHAPTER II

A MORAL DISQUISITION

WHEN Mrs. Foster's gray puffs had been restored to their normal state of precision and her damp gown exchanged for one of stiff black silk, she descended to the sitting-room with a somewhat mollified aspect. Once comfortably settled before the hearth she glanced critically around the shabby room, with its worn horsehair furniture and threadbare carpet, and observed, "I see you have not yet repapered the walls, George."

"There's no hurry," said Mr. Fenwick, placidly.

"I presume Archie has not come back yet," she surmised, dusting the arms of her chair with her handkerchief before venturing to lay her hands upon them.

"No, but we won't wait for him," said Effie, a trifle plaintively, harassed by visions of cold biscuits and heavy omelet. "Will you come to supper now?"

A MORAL DISQUISITION

Mrs. Foster rose with deliberation and led the way to the dining-room, followed by the two boys. The omelet fulfilled poor Effie's worst apprehensions, and the table manners of the children left much to be desired. She poured the tea in fear and trembling, altered the contents of her aunt's cup three times before suiting her taste, and furtively shook her head at her juniors, who, being in the habit of following their own inclinations, were in no mood to be checked by this distressed pantomime.

"Another time," said Mrs. Foster, "I shall use my own discretion with regard to the station. I have no desire to intrude myself where my presence is unwelcome. The man on the platform was most impertinent, and it was only by the merest chance that I was able to take the stage at all. I can not imagine why Effie was so anxious to have me get off there instead of at the village."

"It's so much cleaner and newer," said Effie with a rising flush.

"Well, I can just tell you," said Robin, the eldest boy, pausing, knife in hand, and turning a face of dreadful juvenile significance upon his unfortunate sister. "It's because she wanted to see the Club people."

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"To have them see her, you mean," said Henry, between two bites of bread and butter.

Poor Effie's flush deepened to a vivid scarlet, and the tears flew into her eyes. "You're very saucy," she said, sharply, and bent her head over the teapot.

"Never mind their nonsense, my dear," said her grandfather, soothingly. "They mean no harm."

"If there is a word of truth in what they say, it is high time I came here," said Mrs. Foster, sternly. "You have allowed Effie to run wild for six years, and this is the result!"

"I'm not quite clear as to the exact significance of your climax," said Mr. Fenwick, placidly helping himself a second time to the untempting omelet.

"I had fancied that even you would know better than to allow a granddaughter of yours to make herself conspicuous for the benefit of the people who belong to this precious Club!" she explained.

"How *can* I make myself conspicuous, when I don't know them?" cried Effie, indignantly. "I'm sure, no one would ever look at me, and it does me no harm to see them."

"Pardon me, it does you a great deal of

A MORAL DISQUISITION

harm," said Mrs. Foster, severely. "I rode from the station to the Club House in company with a shameless pack of them, and I was thankful that you were not in the stage to be contaminated by the laxity of their manners. There sat Mrs. Percy Townshend, ogling and flirting, and collecting men by the way, while her husband and children are scattered over the country. And there was Mrs. Trevor, too, also without her husband, talking in whispers to Sidney Percival, but I overheard enough to understand that her brother has been expelled from Harvard. As for Sidney Percival's mother, she was dressed like a girl of twenty, and behaved like one."

"She doesn't look a day over thirty-five," said Mr. Fenwick.

"She is enameled, of course. Then there was poor Mrs. Floyd's vulgar son, who went direct to the Club House, and probably won't go near his mother all the time he is here. I wonder what she thinks of the Club?"

"If she thinks as I do, she doesn't object to anything that quadruples the value of her land," said Mr. Fenwick. "I've had three offers for my meadow lot this year, all for more than I originally paid for the whole place."

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"These booms never last," Mrs. Foster predicted cheerfully.

"The Trevors must have made a pretty penny already, selling what land they didn't want themselves," the old gentleman went on.

"They will need it, at the rate they are spending," she observed. "A sad sight I call it to see a young man of Roy Trevor's age with nothing on earth to do but ride over fences and drive four-in-hand."

"And here you may see an old man with nothing to do but drive four-in-hand, eh, chicks?" said Mr. Fenwick, beaming upon his grandchildren. "When Archie gets back we will ask your aunt if she ever saw a finer four than mine."

Mrs. Foster sniffed at her brother's favorite joke, which, it must be owned, she had heard many times before. "I should say that your four-in-hand drove you," she remarked. "Robin, take your elbows off the table."

"They have remodeled the house and terraced the front lawn," said Mr. Fenwick, "and Mrs. Townshend is building a cottage on the corner next the Floyds'."

"The Trevors have six men in livery, for

A MORAL DISQUISITION

the butcher counted," Robin spoke up, with his elbows on the table again.

"Madam Trevor was contented with one," Mrs. Foster observed. "She had the same mulatto waiter for twenty years, and he never wore livery. Vulgar ostentation, I call it!"

"Madam Trevor hated to spend money," said Mr. Fenwick, "but she was a *grande dame* of the old school, and she certainly knew how to bring up her granddaughters. Lovely creatures, both of them—so unaffected and simple, and so singularly unspoiled!"

"Then how, pray, do you account for Sidney Percival?" Mrs. Foster demanded.

Mr. Fenwick declined to own himself worsted by this seemingly obscure question. "Oh, well, they were brought up together," he said. "My only wonder is that he didn't marry one of those girls."

"I doubt if Madam Trevor would have permitted it," said Mrs. Foster. "A man with his reputation!"

"What did he do?" Effie demanded breathlessly. She knew, like all Fortmounthouse, how Madam Trevor had engaged the beauty to her cousin; how the match had been broken off; how Percival had appeared as a

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avored suitor, and how, at the very time when everything seemed settled, Trevor had returned and carried off the prize. But of this other matter she had heard nothing.

"He is said to have eloped with a married woman," her aunt replied; "and, while his family deny it, there is no smoke without fire."

"Madam Trevor evidently didn't believe that story, or she would not have allowed him to pay his addresses to Clip," said Mr. Fenwick, "and everybody knows how incensed she was when Clip refused him. His money seems to have steadied him. I tell you, I'm a judge of character, and no man who looks you in the eyes as he does has ever done a shady thing."

"You don't call it 'shady' to dangle after a married woman, I suppose," said his sister, "and doing his best to compromise her?"

"You don't take into consideration that he and Roy Trevor have always been like David and Jonathan," said Mr. Fenwick. "Even loving the same girl couldn't break that friendship. It's all straight enough, but people must talk. If I were a multimillionaire, with the prettiest women in town in full cry after me, and all the temptations

A MORAL DISQUISITION

that unlimited means bring in their train, I doubt very much if I should come out of the ordeal as well as he seems to. He's no saint, but, at least, he's a man."

A heavy tramp now sounded in the hall, and Archie entered the room, looking cold, tired and disgusted. "Ah, now I have my four-in-hand complete," the old gentleman called out, but Archie only growled a word of greeting to his aunt, and seated himself at the supper table, calling for something hot immediately. He was a slim, red-haired youth, not ill-looking, and caressed an incipient mustache with fostering care.

"Where have you been? Aunt Katherine had to take the stage," said Effie, sweetening his tea with a lavish hand.

"I got upset in the mud. The horse took fright at the cars, and bolted with me," said Archie, sulkily. "I took him back to Salter's and walked home. I didn't think a woman would care to drive after him."

"And with this brute you proposed to meet me!" said his aunt.

"Well, there's no harm done," said Archie. "You're here safely, and so am I."

Effie's little nose was uptilted ever so

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slightly, and her pretty chin followed the same direction. Her eyes were deep blue, and her skin of that milky whiteness which accompanies such hair as hers—light golden-auburn, dark in the shadow, dazzling in the sunlight. She was neither tall nor short, and in spite of her youth there was not an angle about her figure, save what was distinctly due to the limitations of a country dressmaker. “She must have a couple of years at a good school,” Mrs. Foster was reflecting, when her attention was recalled to the immediate present by a bread-ball whizzing past her nose—a token of the terms of good fellowship and perfect equality on which Mr. Fenwick lived with his “four-in-hand.”

CHAPTER III

WE DISCUSS WEIGHTY MATTERS

AT the Club House Mr. Dickman was giving a dinner to three of the four ladies who had arrived on Friday afternoon. It was Sunday night, raw and cold outside, warm and brilliantly lighted in the large dining-room, where half a dozen tables were occupied by groups of chattering people, up for the three days' respite from urban pursuits which is all one can reasonably be expected to endure on a stretch. At Mr. Dickman's social board great bowls of forced spring flowers were withering under the radiance of the candles in their silver branches, and Bobby Floyd was eating his heartiest in the company of the chosen few who comprised the holy of holies in his set. Here was Mrs. Percy Townshend, dressed in black as a concession to the penitential season, and exhibiting a pair of very handsome shoulders in compliment to her host. Here, too, were Mrs. Beverly, in gray

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silk that had lost its first freshness, and Mrs. Trevor, in pale pink, with a translucency of complexion and a golden sheen of hair before which the attractions of the other ladies and the delicacy of the yellow jonquils and white hyacinths paled and waned. The beauty's husband—handsome, fair, and languid—was fortifying his constitution with ruddy duck and saying little. Percival sat between Mrs. Trevor and Mrs. Beverly. He appeared more cheerful than on the day of his arrival, when he had listened to confidential murmurs in the stage. He had a well-groomed, thoroughbred look, and a manner that was what he chose to make it. In the faultless oval of glossy linen which overspread his broad chest was a single stud composed of a solitaire pearl.

“Well, upon my word!” cried Mr. Floyd, as two people seated themselves at a neighboring table. “There's May Kennedy with her new husband. Quick work, that. Got rid of Kennedy on Friday afternoon and married Bertram Saturday morning.”

“It is perfectly disgusting,” said Mrs. Townshend, nodding to the newly assorted couple, but without her usual cordiality. “One

WE DISCUSS WEIGHTY MATTERS

ought not to recognize them, but what can one do? I sympathized so thoroughly with her sister, and though the case is quite different, May wouldn't understand why I don't sympathize with her."

"It's impossible to draw the line nowadays," Mrs. Beverly opined. "Everybody does that sort of thing. Two of my cousins changed husbands last spring. It was very amicably arranged, and I can't see that they are less run after."

"Grandmamma never received people like that," said Mrs. Trevor, "and I think she was right. Every one seems to forget that marriage is a sacrament. If a man treats you so that you can't remain under the same roof with him, I suppose you must leave him, but he is your husband just the same until he dies."

"Still, the possibility of escaping a life-sentence robs matrimony of half its terrors," said Dickman. "I myself wouldn't shrink from trying it for a year or two."

"How soon you would learn the peril of joking on the subject!" said Trevor. "Such jests are not permitted in my domestic circle."

"Of course they are not. It is scandalous," said Mrs. Townshend.

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"Then why didn't you cut the Bertram outfit?" Trevor inquired with curiosity.

"One doesn't like to be singular, and I do hate to be considered a prig. I know we ought to set an example, but when you begin to draw the line you are bound to hurt so many people whom you really like."

"To say nothing of the fact that there's always a case or two in one's own family," said Mrs. Beverly. "Your Kendal man is right, Spriggy, when he says we are retrograding from over-civilization. We are all on the downward path."

"Now I don't agree with that," said Mrs. Townshend. "I'm sure we are much better off than our great-grandfathers were, and as for those poor wretched people in the Middle Ages, I'd rather be a typewriter in our Girls' Lodging-houses to-day than a queen in those times. Think of the misery of those draughty castles, without gas or furnaces, or any modern improvements!"

"Or electricity," Trevor suggested. "Have they attacked you yet on the subject of bedroom candles, Dickman?"

"It's all very well for *you*! If you want gas you've only to go to your own house, but

WE DISCUSS WEIGHTY MATTERS

if you had to dress yourself before one of those mirrors—" Mrs. Townshend began.

"Don't you think you can stand it until you get into your own house, Spriggy?" Trevor inquired. "I wish to state now, to as many as are here present, that next year I resign, with bloodshed if need be, from the Governing Committee of this Club. The office isn't as much of a sinecure as I fondly fancied it was going to be."

"Well, if you can't make it a sinecure I don't know who can!" cried Mr. Floyd.

"I didn't expect, when in the fulness of my guileless enthusiasm I allowed myself to be drawn into this undertaking, that I should find traitors in my own camp," said Trevor. "I didn't know that I should be overwhelmed with complaints from the disaffected members of my own family. I would have you to know, Mrs. Townshend, that it isn't every one who is blessed with your executive ability. We poor creatures are only men. Now if you will take my place——"

"Thanks, but with the Coal and Kerosene Club and the hospital on my hands, to say nothing of my mission class, I'm not seeking occupation for my spare moments," said Mrs.

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Townshend. "You lucky men have nothing to do but attend to my requests, while I am up to my eyes in reports and subscription lists. I came here for peace, but I see I can't have it, even here."

"I was telling Mrs. Townshend, *à propos des bottes*, that I thought her very foolish to waste her time and energies in trying to improve people who don't wish to be improved," said Mrs. Beverly.

"Well, if they don't, they ought to," said Mrs. Townshend with decision.

"How do you propose bringing them to a realizing sense of their moral obligations?" Percival inquired. "Of course they don't like to be improved. Nobody does. It's equivalent to admitting that there's room for improvement."

"Will you come down and take a boys' club if I'll tell you the secret of my great success?" Mrs. Townshend asked laughing.

"You say I have no discipline when I take your children to the circus," said Percival reflectively. "How should I manage with newsboys?"

"You might give 'em drawing lessons," Trevor suggested.

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“No,” said Percival, “I’m told that that would be false socialism. If I couldn’t afford to pay some one else to do it, I should have a right to foster all the young Raphaels I could discover, but as things stand, it’s my duty to do it by proxy only.”

“That’s where I don’t agree with Mr. Kendal,” said Mrs. Townshend. “Of course in one way he is right. We have no right to deprive any one else of employment, and that young man I engaged to give the drawing lessons certainly needed the money. But I think a great deal of personal influence, and there’s no influence so great as a teacher’s. You can get nearer to them in that way than in any other—except, of course, college settlements, which are out of the question for a woman with children.”

“At it again!” cried Mr. Floyd. “Now, if you must go at the poor tooth and nail, why don’t you ask *my* opinion, and learn something practical? The true way to reach their hearts is to share in their simple vices, and gain their confidence by rushing the growler with them. They’d take advice from you over the social cup that they’d slug you for under ordinary circumstances. When you’ve set up enough

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drinks I believe you could even induce 'em to wash their faces."

"But I am trying to make them *want* to wash their faces," Mrs. Townshend protested.

"I'm rather sorry for them, do you know?" said Percival. "It's a shame to bother them so. I'm thinking of founding a society for the purpose of supplying the *unworthy* poor with superfluities—feathered hats and accordions, if you like—not the things they need, but the things they *want*. I know from experience how excessively dull and profitless it is to have only the things you ought to have."

"When was that? Since I've known you?" his cousin Bobby inquired artlessly.

"Well, you're all very flippant and frivolous, and I wish I could carry you directly down to the East Side and show you some of the sights I see every week," said Mrs. Townshend. "I won't spoil your dinner by going into details, but it is enough to break anybody's heart but Bobby's. It isn't my fault, of course, and yet it distresses me so that I feel I'm somehow to blame for it—that I have no right to go to a good tailor when some people have no shoes, or enjoy my dinner when other people haven't enough to eat. And

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sometimes I think we have done no good at all, and that they are quite right when they resent our trying."

"But you always do the right thing," said Mrs. Trevor, admiringly. Mr. Floyd, however, looked displeased.

"Spriggy as reformer!" he cried. "I must say I don't like this hobby as well as I did the theatricals, or even the clay-modeling. You've had a turn at everything else, and now it's slumming. It's a bad business, too. Aren't there enough beggars and humbugs and anarchists going the rounds without your encouraging them by pretending that you believe this unholy socialist talk?"

"Perhaps we are going to have a commune here in a few years. I am sure we are told so on all hands," said Mrs. Beverly, "but, for my part, I don't care to anticipate the evil day. And yet they all admit, even your Mr. Kendal, that the poor, as a class, were never so well off as they are to-day, or so discontented."

"Well, for my part," said Mr. Floyd, piously, "I don't think it's right to tamper with the decrees of Providence. We all know that everything is ordered, and if the Lord chose to make me poor, and other people rich, there's

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no sense in making a row about it. There it is—it's a fact, and you couldn't alter it if you argued till doomsday."

"But suppose the commune is ordered?" Trevor suggested. The idea did not seem to disturb him. He continued to eat his dinner with placid relish.

"One doesn't like to insult Providence by holding it accountable for such things," said Dickman.

"The truth is," Mr. Floyd announced with conviction, "there are too many people in the world, and there ought to be a war or something to thin out the ranks."

"If you would only listen when Mr. Kendal explains those things, you wouldn't make such sweeping statements," said Mrs. Townshend. "Didn't you think, Sidney, that he put it all very clearly?"

"I'm sorry to disappoint you, but his theories didn't seem to me to hang together," said Percival. "I was in a state of mind when if he could have proved to me that it was my duty to sell all my goods and give them to the poor, I should have been genuinely relieved. Unfortunately his logic wasn't convincing, and I still labor under the delusion that my un-

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earned increment belongs to me as much as my nose or my convictions, and that individual possessions are no more to be shirked than individual responsibilities, so I must continue to be a cumberer of the earth."

"I believe you would *like* to be a tramp, and not know where your next meal was coming from!" Mr. Floyd exclaimed in disgust.

"If they would ever tell you what to do, you might go ahead and do it," Percival went on, "but, on investigation, it proves to be mostly glittering generalities. We are useless, we are ignoble, we don't earn our right to existence, but grant all that, and does it prove that a hod-carrier or a farm-hand makes better use of his opportunities than we do, or is more worthy to contain the breath of life? I don't claim to be better, but I don't think I'm worse, than the people who call me names. And I'm not at all convinced that in my place they would acquit themselves any better than I do."

"Well, I like to be unprogressive," said Mrs. Beverly. "When people threaten me with revolutions I reflect that the world wasn't made in a day, and it can't be unmade in a day. Here I am, and here I propose to enjoy myself

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to the best of my ability, as long as circumstances permit."

"My sentiments exactly!" said Trevor.

"My husband is a reformer, you know," she continued, addressing the company with beautiful impartiality. "His plan for revolutionizing the world is to begin with the women in it. He doesn't like women. There never yet was a great abstract theory that didn't grow out of some personal like or dislike."

"Well, when the revolution comes, we will barricade our houses and show fight to the last, won't we, Clip?" said Mrs. Townshend, "and go to the scaffold in our best Félix gowns with smiling countenances."

"I sha'n't," said Mrs. Beverly. "I shall pack my portable belongings and flee the country for some haven of rest like St. Petersburg, where if I hold my tongue and mind my own business I shall not be molested."

"I think I should be obliged to stay—to die for my altars and my fires," said Percival, bowing over his glass, to Mrs. Townshend.

"And I," said Bobby, "will drop a brick on your husband, Mrs. Beverly, as he climbs over the barricades."

CHAPTER IV

EFFIE SUCCUMBS TO A FIRST IMPRESSION

BECAUSE she spoke with doubtless well-deserved acrimony of that very select and fashionable body of people comprising the Fortmounthouse Country Club, it must not be surmised that Mrs. Foster was a malicious person, or averse to the pleasures of society. She was merely animated in this instance by that peculiar malignity which the best of people are apt to cherish toward other people who have shown them a little too plainly that their approval is a matter of no consequence. It is probable that the Trevors and their friends were neither as bad as Mrs. Foster thought them, nor as good as they thought themselves, but at all events they lent an interest to a spot which otherwise could boast but little excitement.

Neither did Mrs. Foster intend to render herself obnoxious to her relatives, but to young persons accustomed to bask in the sun of per-

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petual approval her well-meant efforts for their betterment smacked of persecution.

Shortly after his sister's arrival Mr. Fenwick appeared in such gala attire that Effie demanded: "Why are you so dressed up, Grandpa? Are you going up on the hill?"

"I am going to call on Mrs. Floyd," said Mr. Fenwick, "and tell her that your aunt is here."

"Well, just wait a moment and I'll go with you."

"Effie, I beg of you! Don't you know that it is very forward in you to force yourself where you are not invited?" said her aunt. "If Mrs. Floyd chooses to pay me the attention of calling upon me, and if Mrs. Logan finishes your brown dress in time, I will take you myself."

"Let her come now if she likes," said Mr. Fenwick, but Effie's pride was up in arms, and she declined his invitation with decision, saying that she preferred walking to driving, and that she liked to go out by herself—two statements of obvious mendacity, by which she sought to vindicate her insulted dignity.

The hired vehicle was already at the door, and Mr. Fenwick departed, a little upset at his

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granddaughter's evident perturbation of spirit. Katherine was officious. The child might have gone in perfect security of a welcome from Mrs. Floyd. The next time he should make a point of taking her with him.

During the brief period of her visit his sister had managed to bother him considerably about Effie; her attire, education, and prospects had all received a due need of attention from the excellent woman, and Mr. Fenwick, while outwardly retaining his baffling serenity, was beginning to feel a new and disquieting sense of responsibility for the young person's future. All his moral obligations toward his charge, which had occurred to him at odd moments and had comfortably slipped into oblivion again, were dragged ruthlessly to light, and flaunted in his face, and the undeniable grain of truth and expediency which he recognized in his sister's arguments aroused his native stubbornness as no fallacy could have done. Effie was maturing. The house was lonely, the boys, though fine fellows, were rough. It was clear that she ought to see a little of the world—indeed, he had always said so—but it was his place and not Katherine's to decide the protecting wing under which she

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should emerge from her seclusion. Katherine meant well, but her plan of taking Effie away with her was preposterous. There was society in Fortmounthouse—plenty of good society, he repeated to himself a little aggressively. He would speak to Mrs. Floyd about Effie, and arouse her interest in the girl. Mrs. Floyd knew everybody, and could in her turn interest the Trevors in any protégée of hers. It would be an admirable joke on Katherine, and a lesson as well, to carry out the letter of her admonitions while disregarding the spirit. He did not wish to leave home, and he need not be separated from Effie. He was still chuckling over the humor of the idea when his carriage turned in at the massive unhinged gates of Graystone and rolled noisily up the gravel drive to Mrs. Floyd's door.

From the sounds which issued from the parlor it was plain that Mrs. Floyd was entertaining young and lively company, and on entering the room Mr. Fenwick found himself in the presence of the Trevors, Mrs. Townshend, Mrs. Percival, and Bobby Floyd, who was favoring his mother with a call because the others had elected to do so. The old gentleman beamed upon all the ladies impartially, and

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was soon drinking tea in a corner with the charming widow of whom his sister so strenuously disapproved, and learning from her the unexpected news of Mrs. Floyd's intended departure for a year abroad. At this he looked so blank that Mrs. Percival noticed his dismay. "Perhaps the rest of us will see more of you now," she said, with a little laugh which flattered him in the midst of his perturbation.

"If you will take pity on a poor rustic, who will miss his old friends, I will try not to abuse your indulgence unduly," Mr. Fenwick responded. "If I followed my thoughts in person I should bore you often."

"That is a very kind way of putting it, when you know that I am not at all interesting to clever people," said Mrs. Percival. "I am sure you will soon be tired of me, but at all events we can miss Mrs. Floyd together."

"That will be to find joy in sorrow," Mr. Fenwick declared. "The rest of the neighborhood must bear its loss without similar compensation. My poor little granddaughter, for instance—Mrs. Floyd is the one link that connects her with the outer world."

"Your granddaughter? How old is she now?" Mrs. Percival inquired, with that

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cordiality which entailed much boredom upon her from people whom her graciousness encouraged to lengthy confidences. She liked the old gentleman well enough, and she looked at him with the sympathy of an affectionate sister. If she sometimes forgot what you had told her at your last meeting, she was always ready to listen most charmingly while you told it again. Mr. Fenwick, thus assisted by Fate, poured forth Effie's praises, and Mrs. Percival discovered hitherto unsuspected merits in his manner of bringing her up—merits which perhaps had not arisen from any great forethought on his part, but which he promptly took to himself. "And you mean to tell me that you have a granddaughter nearly eighteen? It seems absurd," she declared. "Does anybody believe you when you say it?"

"My youth is so thoroughly a thing of the past that I no longer even regret it," said Mr. Fenwick. "Now with you it is quite different."

"But I can't fib ever so little about my age," said Mrs. Percival, plaintively, "for there is always Sidney."

Roy Trevor came strolling across the room, sent by his wife to say something nice to old Mr. Fenwick, for whom grandmamma had al-

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ways had a great regard, and Mrs. Percival began obligingly to descant on the rumored charms of the unknown damsel. "Do you know, Roy, Mr. Fenwick's Effie is almost nineteen, or is it eighteen?—and he is going to allow her to go about a little this summer. Isn't it delightful? I wish I had a pretty daughter to chaperon. I've had no one at all since Spriggy and Clip married."

"We must have her at the Club," said Trevor, who had never heard of Mr. Fenwick's Effie, but had received his instructions, and moreover was most anxious to induce the old gentleman to part with his meadow-land for the new golf course. "We are always glad to see a pretty girl there. They say it's going to be quite gay in June. I'm sure Clip would be delighted to matronize her. One of the Saturday dances would be the thing, wouldn't it?"

"We must give her a little dinner, as soon as there are a few young people to meet her," said Mrs. Percival. "Sidney will be so interested when I tell him about her!"

Though not extraordinary guileless, this polite fiction, voiced in a tone of sincerity, gave infinite satisfaction to Mr. Fenwick. He began to have ambitions for Effie.

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“Perhaps for once a poor married man can have half a show with the new belle,” said Trevor, laughing. “Tell her she ought to remember that I’m her first friend, and not scratch my dances for Tom, Dick, and Harry the way most of the *débutantes* do after they’re well started.” Mr. Fenwick, gazing into the dim vista of futurity, already beheld his pet pursued by a crowd of eligible young men, but clinging with tender constancy to her grandfather. He saw in fancy the discomfiture of Mrs. Foster, and his own generous but decided triumph. His usually staid imagination played him strange pranks, and soared into altitudes of delightful improbability.

“We are all settled married people now. We need stirring up a bit,” said Trevor. “I’m fond of girls myself. I should like to have one in the family. You must lend her to us, Mr. Fenwick.”

“What if I were to take you at your word?” cried the delighted old gentleman in a jocular manner.

“That is just what we want, don’t we, Mrs. Percival?” said Trevor. “Don’t retreat now. You’ve gone too far. My curiosity is aroused, and if we can’t borrow Miss Effie we shall bear

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you a grudge for all eternity. It's selfish to keep her to yourself. A pretty girl was made to be looked at."

By this time the trio was in quite a gale of merriment, and Mrs. Trevor joined the group to be informed in her turn of the great discovery, and to profess her delight and astonishment at the news. Mr. Fenwick was enraptured at the cordiality with which his overtures were received. It seemed to him quite fortunate, on the whole, that Mrs. Floyd had decided to let her house. Mrs. Townshend had gone with Bobby for a look at the newly christened Red House which was fast nearing completion. It was Mrs. Trevor who walked with Mr. Fenwick to the door.

"Then you would really like to see my Effie?" the beaming old gentleman demanded as he shook hands with her on the steps.

"Yes indeed. I'm so sorry we go back to town to-morrow, but the next time we come up I certainly hope to make her acquaintance," said Mrs. Trevor. "I am sure we shall be good friends. Do you think she will like me, though?"

"My dear young lady, she can not help lov-

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ing you as a sister!" said Mr. Fenwick, with enthusiasm.

"Do you really think so? It would be so nice. You know," said Mrs. Trevor, with a little tremor in her voice, "I had no mother either."

Mr. Fenwick pressed her gloved hand with elderly fervor. She was very charming and must surely appreciate Effie. Katherine, though an excellent woman, was invariably jealous of a pretty face. She did Mrs. Trevor the most cruel injustice. Never was there a sweeter or more unaffected young woman; never did one speak with a truer emotion than this much-discussed beauty. Never had he seen two ladies from whose society a young girl could derive more profit than Mrs. Trevor and Mrs. Percival. He waved a radiant farewell to them from the carriage, and returned to his sister in a frame of mind so elated that she could not refrain from plying him with questions about his visit—questions which he evaded with a skill that startled him and aroused her indignation. He was amazed at his own diplomacy, and glanced at Effie from time to time with fond anticipation, but the young person, being still on her dignity in her

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aunt's presence, and having moreover met with a disagreeable adventure, made no response to his admiring gaze and sulked in a corner.

To explain, if not to excuse, Miss Fenwick's injured mood, it is necessary to revert to the moment of her grandfather's departure, when, in a flurry of outraged dignity, the young lady had marched up-stairs to her own room, arrayed herself in the best her scanty wardrobe afforded, and sallied forth for the walk which she had announced her intention of taking. The roads were still muddy and the sidewalks few and far between. Effie scorned the village, so she turned her steps in the direction of the Club. At certain seasons of the year there was considerable passing, but now there was nothing to be seen save the long wall of Fortmounthouse, the stately yellow and white Colonial mansion with its air of old-time grandeur and modern comfort, the new red cottage, and the massive walls of Graystone, within which, had she known it, she was being discussed with such animation. She was far from suspecting her grandfather's sudden subtleties, and thought only of her aunt's well-meant injustice and of the general loneliness and dulness of her own neglected little exist-

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ence. She was feeling very badly used as she walked along Mr. Floyd's gravel-path, and her sense of injury lasted until she turned and went down the hill again, and toward the village. So far she had not met a soul. There was no one to observe the defective fit of her jacket, the old-fashioned cut of her skirt, or the hated primness of her hat, yet the consciousness of these details weighed down her spirits like a millstone. It is sad to be forced to confess that a young person destined to be a heroine, in however small a way, was not above sulking over the shape of a pair of shoes, or being miserable because she was not allowed to wave her hair. She hated everything. She wanted to go away. She didn't know what was going to become of her, wasting her life in the country. To crown all, it was certainly going to rain.

To do Effie justice, she was overmastered by that feeling of restlessness and impatience and indefinable longing for something beyond her reach which assails young and healthy people with such unconquerable force. Her blood tingled in her veins; her hands twitched with superfluous vigor. She wanted something, and the fact that she did not in the least

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know what that something might be was far from conveying a sense of comfort to her young vitality. She resented her inaction, the dull even tenor of her life, her aunt's overbearing care. She was excited and trembling, and could not tell why. She only knew that she was restless, dissatisfied, unhappy.

The afternoon grew duller and grayer, and the clouds thickened overhead. A few drops of rain fell on her face, and for fear of a wetting she decided to take the short cut through Percival's grounds despite the cross gardener and big dogs which detracted from the pleasure of well-remembered marauding expeditions. Alas! she was too old now to revel in climbing forbidden fences, but anything was preferable to being drenched, so she quickly made her way in at a small gate, and hastened past the house with its row of blankly shuttered windows, down the terraced lawn and into the garden beyond. A strong wind shook the bare branches of the trees and the rain began to fall in great drops. Effie ran as well as she could in the soft wet path, but between mud and wind she made little progress.

Finally at a particularly strong blast her hat, which had been tugging at its string,

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loosed its moorings and flew away. She watched it despairingly as it sailed over a hedge into a ditched field and caught on a clump of bushes between two trenches of muddy water, where it lay flapping with every fresh gust. As she stood ruefully surveying the ditches which stretched between her and her lost headgear, a gate near by slammed suddenly, and a large setter sprang on her with fringed paws plastered with mud. She gave a little scream and pushed him away just as a sharp whistle called him off. She looked around expecting to see her old enemy, the gardener; but her alarm was redoubled when she discovered that the dog's owner, whoever he might be, was a person in evident authority.

He was tall and broad-shouldered; he wore a rough tweed suit and a battered deer-stalker's cap, and he was looking at her with a kind of indifferent curiosity. Her eyes met his in a frightened stare. She became woefully conscious of her bare head, of her unfashionable garments, even of her common-sense shoes, and yet the glance which he accorded her betokened no especial interest. Only as her embarrassment seemed to strike him he fixed his eyes keenly on her, and she

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could not forbear an agonized wriggle under the brief torture of his scrutiny. She was impelled to stammer in explanation of her incomplete appearance, turning even redder in the effort, "I lost my hat. It blew into the field." It occurred to her with dreadful certainty that this must be Sidney Percival.

He followed her glance, perceived the hat, and without a word leaped the hedge, and wading among the submerged bushes, gained the prize and restored it to its owner. The water was streaming from his leggings and he looked anything but interested. Effie gasped, "Oh, thank you!" and walked off at a furious pace, carrying with her the unflattering conviction that he had rendered the service and received the thanks in an impersonal manner anything but gratifying to a nascent vanity. No doubt he regarded her as a trespasser, and his manner, while perfectly well-bred, had certainly conveyed the impression that he considered her an intolerable nuisance. In the novels with which she was in the habit of regaling herself, and from which she had drawn most of her views of life, young gentlemen were always delighted to restore a missing hat or glove to distressed damsels, even

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though obliged to wade through acres of mud to accomplish the task, and they never missed an opportunity of following up an acquaintance so romantically commenced.

Apparently she was too unattractive to be worthy of a second glance, or Mr. Percival was unfit to be judged by the story-book standard. He had been polite, but the most exotic imagination could not have found him gracious. Besides, if he were truly such a Lothario as Aunt Katherine had insinuated, why was he not handsomer? A tired man, bored, disgusted, poking about by himself in clothes that a groom might have worn, not even noticing whether the people he met were worth looking at or not! Was this the fascinating creature against whom her aunt had seen fit to warn the young person at large? And would he have looked twice at her if she had been dressed according to her own taste instead of Mrs. Foster's? She hastened through the cross-road with a swelling throat. Never before had her own insignificance been so brought home to her, and he, the disagreeable creature, had made her feel it! For this seemingly trivial cause Miss Fenwick was downcast and silent all the evening.

CHAPTER V

IN WHICH EFFIE BECOMES A BONE OF CONTENTION

"It seems that Mrs. Floyd's tenants are acquaintances of mine," Mrs. Foster announced one day after dinner. "I met them in the village this morning. They have been up for another look at the house, and very likely they will call this afternoon, so I trust there may be some one presentable to answer the bell, and not to keep Mrs. Porter and her daughter waiting for half an hour on the cold porch as Mrs. Floyd had to wait last week."

"If you hadn't insisted on Delia's blacking the grates that particular afternoon she would have been ready to answer the bell as usual," said Effie, who had yet to learn the gentle art of holding her tongue. "Not that it ever rings, but when I'm not interfered with at every turn the house runs more smoothly."

"You shouldn't answer me in that way,

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when I speak only for your own good," said her aunt. "Don't fancy that I enjoy the care of a house or the management of an impertinent young woman. I undertake them solely from a sense of duty, as you will realize some day after I am gone."

"There's no occasion for high tragedy that I can see," said Mr. Fenwick, selecting feathers for a fly. Effie fidgeted in her chair. It had been dull all day, but the sun was just breaking through the clouds, and the strip of garden in front of the window looked rather inviting. Archie was leaning against the fence with his hands in his pockets, composing a poem on Spring. His aunt continued her dissertation.

"You will find the Porters excellent people, with several daughters and one son. They are very wealthy, connected with the Hoboken Oil Company, and extremely well-conducted. I hardly imagine that they can be acquainted with any of the people at the Club."

Effie shut her lips and determined on no account to like the Porters. How could she find Aunt Katherine's friends congenial?

"You had better put on your brown dress, Effie. I can't see why you will persist in wear-

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ing that over-trimmed rag you have on," her ingratiating relative continued, "and by the way, I took the liberty of putting your bureau drawers and closet in order for once, so you will find all your collars in the top drawer where they belong. Who but you would ever have kept them in a tobacco-jar?"

At this culminating outrage Effie spoke no word, but marched grimly up-stairs to investigate the extent of the sacrilege committed upon that holy of holies, her top drawer. She jerked it open, and stood gazing into its depths at the neat rows of small articles laid out on a clean towel, then, with a sudden revolt against this monstrous infringement of her rights, she seized the drawer by both handles, and cast it ignominiously on to the floor. The bang resounded through the house and made Mrs. Foster jump in her chair. Collars, handkerchiefs, ribbons, lay in a heap at the feet of their outraged owner, with whose just wrath any young lady must sympathize, and who might have carried her demonstrations still further had not her ears caught the sound of wheels at the door. "Horrid people, I suppose they have come!" she surmised, and went to the window to behold Roy Trevor alighting

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from a black and yellow dog-cart and giving some parting instructions to the groom who stood at the head of the bay cob.

Effie stood with her hands clasped, surveying this bewildering dandy, whom she had never before beheld at such close quarters. It was generally conceded by their worst enemies that the Trevors were a handsome family, with fine figures, well-cut features, and a dash and vigor which redeemed their fair complexions from effeminacy, and this perfectly appointed creature seemed to her the composite of all her favorite heroes of romance, embodied for her especial delectation. If Percival had disappointed her, Trevor enchanted her. He was all the most exacting critic could demand, from the sweep of his yellow mustache to the bunch of violets in his buttonhole. The bell rang, the door was opened, she heard him asking for her grandfather, but no summons came for her from below. It was just like Aunt Katherine not to call her until those stupid Porters arrived! She determined to go down without a special invitation. Wasn't she the mistress of the house? So she descended with a beating heart, and found Trevor seated in the parlor, talking in the

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most engaging manner to Mrs. Foster, while Mr. Fenwick disentangled fish-hooks from his coat preparatory to receiving company. She marveled at her aunt's unresponsiveness. How was it possible to be ungracious to a creature so frank and winning?

If Mrs. Foster viewed from the safe vantage-ground of the hall had seemed unappreciative of her good fortune, Mrs. Foster at close quarters was truly awful, for, seeing her grandniece enter unbidden, her lips folded ominously, and the temperature descended perceptibly. Fortunately Mr. Fenwick came to the rescue at this critical moment, or it might have fared ignominiously with Effie. As it was, she shook hands with the visitor, and settled herself, feeling that reinforcements had arrived.

Trevor had, to tell the truth, quite forgotten Effie's existence, and had come with an ax to grind, but on seeing her he recalled the enthusiastic descriptions her grandfather had given of her, and looked at her with some interest. He was rather pleased with her than otherwise, and said pretty things to her in a paternal manner. He urged Mr. Fenwick to join the Club, and he delivered messages from

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Mrs. Trevor, who had expected to call with him, but had been detained. No one would have suspected from his manner that he was there under protest, on behalf of the Governors of the Club, and that inwardly he was cursing his friend Percival in the most heartfelt terms for having flatly declined to transact the business for him. He coveted the meadow-land, but why on earth couldn't Sidney have deferred his trip to Santa Barbara until some more auspicious time? He wasn't generally so unaccommodating. So, after many blandishments, the unwilling ambassador gently hinted to Mr. Fenwick that his visit was not without a purpose, and carried him off ostensibly to inspect the poultry-yard, where the old gentleman raised fancy fowls with enthusiasm, but in reality to broach the subject nearest his heart at the moment. As they went out he said something to Effie which her aunt was unable to catch, but of which the good lady promptly demanded an explanation.

"What did Mr. Trevor mutter to you just now?"

"*Mutter?* He asked me if I wasn't coming out to the poultry-yard with them, and I am, as soon as I can find my best jacket. I should

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like to know where to look for it—in the wash-stand drawer, perhaps?” said Effie, with scathing sarcasm.

“In the proper place for a jacket. You should have no difficulty in finding it,” said her aunt; “but you are not going to run after him in that manner. You will stay quietly here with me.”

Effie went up-stairs, routed the coat out of her wardrobe, and hurried to the front door. Her aunt called to her twice, but she would not answer. She had very little desire to see Trevor again after Mrs. Foster’s insinuation, but she would endure no more, so she waited by the chicken-house until she saw her grandfather and his visitor returning from the meadows. Both seemed very well satisfied with the result of their colloquy, and they all walked back to the house together, talking like old friends. Effie was very confidential with him, as indeed she always was with those she favored. At the moment of parting Mr. Fenwick cried out to him jocosely, “Do you still expect to be taken at your word?”

“More than ever,” said Trevor, with an illuminating smile at Effie. “We are going to kidnap you, you know. Don’t forget me in the

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meantime. It's generally my lot to be forgotten."

"But I sha'n't see anybody else," said Effie.

"Then may I hope that you will keep a dance for me?" he asked, as he turned out for another carriage that was driving through the gate. The newcomers were evidently the Porters.

Mrs. Foster, who had been watching the farewells from the window, was forced to defer the manifestation of her wrath and welcome her friends with affability. Mrs. Porter was a stout middle-aged woman with an effusive manner. Her daughter was a brunette, very young, very pretty, and very fashionably dressed. The four ladies sat facing each other under the twin engravings of "Mercy's Dream" and "Charity," Mr. Fenwick having promptly disappeared.

"You live here all the year round, don't you?" Miss Porter began. "How do you like it?"

"Well, you see, I have never lived anywhere else," said Effie; "but it is very lonely."

"I think it's perfectly lovely here!" said Miss Porter. "I don't see how it can be lonely

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with the Club so near—but perhaps you're not out yet?"

"No, I'm not," said Effie, "and I'm afraid I never shall be. I never see any one."

"Don't tell stories!" said Miss Porter, archly. "Didn't I meet Mr. Trevor as I came in?"

"He came to see grandpa. Isn't he lovely?" Effie cried with enthusiasm.

"Yes, and so handsome! What a pity he is married!" said Miss Porter. "I think he and Sidney Percival are simply the most fascinating creatures I ever saw. I just rave about them till it's positively shocking!"

"Well, how any one can rave about Mr. Percival I do not see," said Effie with decision.

"Oh, he's so swell!" Miss Porter exclaimed, clasping her hands over her card-case in the excess of her admiration. "And such lovely eyes, and looks so well on a horse! I see him riding nearly every day with Mrs. Trevor in the park, and he's simply divine—not exactly handsome, you know, but so awfully fascinating!"

"Isn't Mrs. Trevor lovely?" Effie demanded with radiant admiration. "I'm sure she's an angel."

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"An angel? Oh, I don't know," said Miss Porter. "Of course, dark eyes and blond hair are tremendously fetching. Fancy marrying your own cousin!"

"Can you wonder that they adore each other?"

"They say they don't. I guess she and Mrs. Townshend both have a pretty gay time. Which do you think Mr. Percival is devoted to? He is always with one or the other."

"As though she would look at him!" said Effie, indignantly.

"Of course, she's too clever to compromise herself," Miss Porter continued, in a very sophisticated manner which sat oddly on so young a person.

Effie instinctively perceived that her idol was being traduced, and demanded severely, "Do you know Mrs. Trevor?"

Her new acquaintance turned red, but said candidly, "No, I don't. You see, they are tremendously hard to know when you're not in the same set, and if you do get an introduction to them, they never remember you the next time they meet you. I'm sure I'd give my eyes to know Mr. Percival, but, dear me! nobody has half a chance."

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“Well, I don’t think I wish to know him,” said Effie.

“I see mamma getting up, so I must say good-by,” said Miss Porter. “Be sure you come and see me as soon as we are settled. I’ll let you know right away.” She gave Effie’s hand the fashionable high jerk, and followed her mother down the walk, leaving the decks cleared for action.

On hearing the front door slam Mr. Fenwick had returned to his flies, but before he could select a feather the battle burst around him. His sister entered the room propelling the unwilling Effie before her, and so fraught with portent was the atmosphere that he instinctively nerved himself for the fray. “George,” said Mrs. Foster in an awful voice, “I beg you to speak to your granddaughter.”

Effie jerked herself free from the hand of Nemesis. “If it’s about the bureau drawers,” she cried, “I won’t listen. And what’s more, I won’t stand it. Nobody would stand it! All the things are on the floor now, and if anybody dares to touch them again, I’ll throw them out of the window!”

“I am not alluding even to that,” said her aunt. “I am accustomed to seeing you disre-

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gard every wish of mine, but when your grandfather knows the truth about your conduct this afternoon, even he will have no excuse to offer for you. I was aware that your lawlessness knew no bounds, but when it comes to making appointments with strange men, of whose character you have been warned, who will ridicule you to their boon companions over their wine——”

“ Oh, oh! ” cried Effie in rage and horror.

“ What is all this row about? ” her grandfather demanded helplessly.

Mrs. Foster, thus appealed to, gave vent to all the rancorous eloquence of which an elderly relative is capable, and soared to those heights of oratory attainable only when the theme is the shortcomings of one's next of kin. Effie's conduct with Trevor was depicted in colors so black, and with such depths of unsuspected significance, that consternation temporarily deprived her of speech, and her aunt terminated her peroration uninterrupted, with: “ If you are unable to control her, George, it is time she left your charge. There are people who can mend her manners, if you can't, and it is high time they were about it.”

“ You sha'n't talk to me so! grandpa, I

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haven't done anything," cried Effie. "I won't stand it. Need I stand it?"

"Leave the child alone," said Mr. Fenwick. "You'll ruin her disposition by this eternal faultfinding."

"It is wicked to allow that poor motherless child to grow up in lawless ignorance," Mrs. Foster declaimed; "and some day she will give you cause to bitterly repent your foolish indulgence."

Effie's sobs here became tempestuous, and she flew like a small whirlwind to her grandfather, crying, "Don't let her take me away! I won't go! I won't! I want to stay here with you. I don't care if I never see another soul—I want to stay!"

"Of course you sha'n't go," said Mr. Fenwick. "What did I tell you, Katherine? Look at this poor child! By Gad, it's a shame! If she is to be taught manners, I'll find some one besides you to teach her. I'll consult Mrs. Trevor."

The two elderly people glared at each other in consternation. Each had gone further than had at first been intended, and neither proposed to retreat an inch. Mr. Fenwick's slow anger had been kindled by this onslaught on

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his pet, and his menacing reference to Mrs. Trevor, while it seemed preposterous, was nevertheless most alarming to his sister. Effie's sobs and gasps of mingled terror and temper sounded in the silence from her grandfather's shoulder.

"If you do," said Mrs. Foster after the pause, "I will never forgive you."

"Pooh-pooh! Nonsense!" said her brother.

Mrs. Foster turned on her heel and left the room to pack her trunk. She had no intention of quarreling permanently with her brother, but her dignity demanded vindication, and she proposed to convince him of the fact that she was not to be trifled with. Her departure must inevitably bring him to his senses, and an abject apology might induce her to return. Mr. Fenwick, however, was far from appearing properly contrite. He expostulated a little, it is true, and told her she was very foolish, which was not what she wanted, and they parted without capitulation on either side, leaving the bone of contention once more to her own devices.

CHAPTER VI

IN WHICH FAMILY MATTERS ARE FREELY DISCUSSED

APRIL came and went in uneventful fashion for the Fenwicks, with nothing more interesting to watch than the swelling of the trees into leafage, and the sodding of the greens on the new golf course into which a Scotch expert was transforming the meadow lots. At Fortmounthouse the great lawn was growing greener and more velvety every day, the ivy and honeysuckle showed their delicate sprays against the walls, and the beds were gay with tulips and hyacinths. Mrs. Townshend's cottage was finished and its mistress installed in it. Her tennis-court was already a center of attraction to people from the Club, and the Porters, who had come early to Graystone, watched her guests from their windows with a wistful eye. It was there that Mr. Floyd disported himself in an orange sweater, and was seen to drink six mint juleps running. Here also came the Trevors, strolling over the

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lawn in sociable fashion under the same white parasol, and Percival, who generally rode from the Club and smoked a pipe while the others played. The grass was still a little damp and chilly, and warm clothes were not unwelcome when the game was over, but the wicker chairs and bright cushions looked quite picturesque and oriental, and those who felt shivery could always seek the open fire which burned in the hall.

It was on one of these cool days early in May that Trevor, resuming his coat after a game of tennis, inquired of his hostess, "Did Clip tell you that the Child is coming home? He has had enough of Dakota, and we may prepare to kill the fatted calf about next Thursday."

"The great beauty of Jim is that you can never tell what he is going to do next," said Mrs. Townshend.

"I shall be quite glad to see him again," said Mr. Floyd. "Things aren't so dull when he is here."

"Oh, I'm always glad to see him myself," Trevor remarked. "Dear old Child! When he's just come, or just going, I'm awfully fond of him."

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"I'm fond of him when he's here," said Mrs. Trevor.

"Well, he's your brother. One ought to like one's relatives, even if one doesn't," Mr. Floyd observed pensively. "What are you going to do with him? Turn him out to grass?"

"Turn him over to Spriggy. She has a kindergarten already," said Trevor.

"I wouldn't mind in the least," said Mrs. Townshend, obligingly. "It's only a question whether my waning charms will be powerful enough to hold him."

"By the way, Sidney," said Trevor, seating himself beside his friend, "Clip wants me to talk seriously to the Child about his extravagance, and living within his income, and all that, but you know very well how much good it would do, and he's got a nasty temper when he's bothered. What's the use of having unpleasantness in the family? He won't stand advice from me, and he will from you. I wish you'd just put it to him clearly, and explain to him why he can't fool with his principal for a couple of years at least."

"It seems to me that as you're his trustee—" Percival began.

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“Ah, that’s just why he won’t listen to me. I have also the disadvantage of being his brother-in-law. He doesn’t find me disinterested or something of the sort, and he tells Clip that women don’t understand business,” Trevor interpolated. “Now he’s fond of you, and he may possibly heed what you say.”

“So you think I’m going to say it?”

“Why, of course you are,” said Trevor, laughing, “and it will be the greatest possible relief to both of us. Clip will give me no peace until the thing is done, and you are the only one who can do it without fearful scenes of carnage. I can’t stand rows.”

“I know nothing about his confounded little affairs,” said Percival, sadly.

“Clip will tell you. She has a wonderful head for such things, in spite of the Child’s crushing scorn,” said Trevor. “Thanks awfully, old man!”

“Come, Roy, I must tear you away. You know we have people to dinner,” said Mrs. Trevor.

As the Trevors strolled homeward, Mr. Floyd surveyed their vanishing figures reflectively. “Chummy, aren’t they?” he com-

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mented. "I hear that Mrs. Beverly is expected again."

"I wonder why that woman is so attractive?" Mrs. Townshend mused. "She doesn't know how to do her hair, and her clothes look as if they had been dropped on her by the hand of Providence, but she's tremendously fetching all the same."

"Well, if I were Clip," Mr. Floyd observed meaningly, "I shouldn't be quite so intimate with her. It's my belief that she fancies Roy."

"A woman like Clip need not fear a rival whose hairpins are all over the place," said Mrs. Townshend.

Mr. Floyd was pounding green mint in the bottom of his glass. "Anyhow, he's too lazy to run after any woman," he said. "He would get Clip to breathe for him if he could—and she'd do it, too, little fool! I was glad when he had to attend to the golf-course, whether or no. By the way, I hear old man Fenwick is sick. Mother wrote me to go and inquire, but I can't be bothered."

"Dear me, I'm sorry to hear of it," said Mrs. Townshend. "He is a nice old thing, and grandmamma always thought a great deal of him. I must send to inquire to-morrow."

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"Now have they carried the vermouth back to the house?" Mr. Floyd demanded in poignant anguish. "I was inspired at that moment to invent a new drink. I'll go and get it."

"He will certainly kill himself," said Mrs. Townshend, as he departed. "Percy and I were up with him all Tuesday night, and I know he will die in one of these attacks. He says so himself, yet see how he eats and drinks."

"He has the constitution of an ox," said Percival, unfeelingly. "While we have a moment of peace, I want to ask you about the hospital. You said something the other day about a new operating room. If you will give me an idea of what you need, I will have them send you some estimates next week."

"I hadn't the assurance to ask for it, after all you have done already," said Mrs. Townshend, "but since you so kindly suggest it, the Board of Managers accepts with thanks on the spot. It is beautiful to feel that we can have what we need without giving some horrible catch-penny entertainment to raise the necessary sum. But don't hurry about it, Sidney, for we can't have the workmen in before

FAMILY MATTERS DISCUSSED

August, and I know you have a good deal on your hands at any time."

"Things are running quite smoothly at last," said Percival. "I know now what I ought to do, and how to do it, but it has taken me an absurd time to learn. The rudiments of business come hard when a man has turned thirty, and I always hated the sort of details that I have been wallowing in for the past four or five years. I wish I had never discovered how Uncle Maturin had been robbed."

"Oh, but surely you are glad you found out the condition of those Chrystie Street houses," Mrs. Townshend protested.

"I believe your idea of bliss is demolishing an old tenement and erecting a model one in its place," said Percival, "and I am about to offer you the chance of a lifetime. There are three more of them that must come down, and you can run the whole show if you like, and see that poor old Hobson isn't cheated again about the building materials."

"I wouldn't employ a person like that, and then do all the work myself," said Mrs. Townshend.

Percival groaned. "He was with Uncle Maturin for twenty years, and he weeps when

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pensions are mentioned in his hearing. However, the poor old ass can't live forever, and you wouldn't care to hurt his feelings. I'll tell him that you and Kendal are to decide about the plans. I'm thinking of going to China with Jones next month."

"Good heavens!" Mrs. Townshend ejaculated.

"Jones is sent out by a syndicate," he went on, "and I thought it would be a good chance for me to do some sketching. I suppose I may be permitted to paint occasionally, if I don't sell my pictures?"

"I don't see why you care to go there again," said Mrs. Townshend, frankly disconsolate, "just as you are getting really interested in the things you ought to do."

"My dear Spriggy, that sounds very pretty," said Percival, "but what sort of a life is this for an able-bodied man to lead? I am sufficiently inoculated with the prevailing earnestness to feel that it is wrong to allow one's principal to accumulate, and still, I lack the conviction that all this laborious tearing down and building up is the right thing after all. Of course, the estate has got to be managed, and I promised the old man I would stay

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here and attend to it, but I want to get away somewhere for a while, where I can breathe and be free. It's absurd to speak of it—I'm never sick—but this thing is getting on my nerves. I want to go where I'm not held responsible for other people's dirt and ignorance and immorality. Then I can shoulder my own sins in peace and enjoy life as though I were a comfortable pauper."

"Then you stay here only because you promised Uncle Maturin?"

"And for one or two other reasons which do me very little credit," said Percival, "so I think I had better go."

"Yes, if you feel like that. I understand that the care and responsibility must be very wearing, and the pleasure not what it ought to be, in proportion—and he never expected you to bear it alone. But doesn't it make you happy to think of all you have done to make those poor people comfortable, and give them the best of everything they need?"

"My dear girl, if my money hasn't been absolutely worthless, I must thank you for it," said Percival. "As to what it can do under your management, that work goes on better without me than with me. You administer

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far more sensibly than I could, and I get the credit for it."

"If I do it well, it is because I love it so, and because I have the best help in the world from you. And I shall so miss talking things over with you!" sighed Mrs. Townshend. "Well, I suppose you know what you want."

"I'm not so sure of it," said Percival. He shook the ashes out of his pipe, and thrust it into his pocket. "I shall inform Bobby of my intentions when I'm ready to start," he said, holding out his hand to his hostess. "I only bothered you with this to-day because the time is uncertain, and I know you for a methodical person."

His horse was at the door, and as he mounted and rode off, Mrs. Townshend stood watching him, so absorbed in her own reflections that she was unaware of Mr. Floyd's reappearance, with a glass of his own concoction in his hand. "Just taste this and tell me whether it's fit to drink," he said. "I waited till you and Sidney had done flirting before I came out."

"We were doing something far worse in your eyes," said Mrs. Townshend. "Talking hospital."

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"Charity covers a multitude of sins," he observed knowingly.

"I'm sorry for Sidney," she said, absently sipping her beverage.

"Sorry for that lucky beggar? Well, what next?" cried Mr. Floyd.

CHAPTER VII

IN WHICH MR. FENWICK REGULATES HIS AFFAIRS

“THIS is the last thing I expected,” said Mr. Fenwick. “To be sure, it’s the last thing that any one can expect, but I can’t say that I find much consolation in the reflection.”

He was bolstered up in a reclining chair by one of the front windows, before which he was wheeled every afternoon. From this spot he could watch the antics of Robin and Henry, the arrival of the doctor’s sulky, and the passing of an occasional butcher’s cart. Effie sat opposite him, trying to mend stockings, and blinking hard lest the mist in her eyes should resolve itself into noticeable tears. Archie, lounging on the sofa, twisted a bit of cord uneasily through his fingers, and kept his gaze on the carpet.

“I’m sorry to be obliged to mention it,” said Mr. Fenwick apologetically, “but it must

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come sooner or later. Have the boys been to the post-office?"

"Yes. There was no mail," said Effie.

"It is strange I don't hear from your aunt. Are you sure the letter was posted?" he inquired.

"I posted it myself, fully two weeks ago," said Effie.

"That was the second letter, too," said Archie.

"Are you sure you stated matters plainly?"

"Yes, Grandpa, very plainly," said Effie with a rising sob.

"Perhaps you had better write again, and tell her the doctor's verdict," said Mr. Fenwick.

"Grandpa, I don't believe it. I won't!" cried the poor girl with a burst of grief. "He's mistaken. You will get well!"

"Now don't distress yourself, my dear," said the old gentleman mendaciously. "Still, it will do your aunt no harm to know what he says."

"It strikes me she's extremely unfeeling," said Archie, savagely. "Why hasn't she written, or at least telegraphed? Nobody wants her to come."

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"I certainly expected her to come," said Mr. Fenwick.

"I'm thankful she didn't," said Effie. "If there's anything to be done for you, you know you would rather have me do it, and the nurse knows more than she would, and anyhow, haven't we all we can bear without seeing her?"

"It's pretty hard in her—pretty hard to bear malice this way," Mr. Fenwick mused. "Still, she's my only living relative aside from you. I won't apologize to her, if she does expect it—still you might write once more."

"Grandpa, there's one thing I must say to you," said Effie with a sudden excited determination. "If you're going to be sick like this for a long time, I want to take care of you myself. I don't want her here. And if that dreadful thing should happen—of course it won't, but if it should—what shall we do? Don't make us go to her! You know how she is. We couldn't bear it!"

She flung her yarn on the floor, and subsided into a miserable little heap beside her grandfather's chair, burying her face in the quilt which covered his useless feet, and trembling with grief and apprehension.

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“Don’t let us go to her!” she urged. “Promise me you won’t!”

Mr. Fenwick’s heart hardened against his sister at this outburst. If Effie regarded her with such dread, it was plain that the poor child had a dreary future before her, yet what was to be done? Katherine was his only standby, and a decision of some sort was imminent. Who but his sister could act as the children’s guardian?—and yet here were Effie plunged into a tempest of tears at the very mention of her aunt’s name, and Archie sullen and wretched in his corner. Resentment against her past unkindness grew in his heart. Why could she not have conducted herself more graciously? Why did she not evince a more forgiving spirit? She was hard—too hard—to be entrusted with the management of four self-willed young people. The unhappy gentleman was prepared to accept the inevitable with philosophy on his own account, but the thought of what it would mean to his grandchildren destroyed his peace of mind. “You will all have your own money, you know,” he said, soothingly, “and Archie will soon be of age.”

But Effie’s apprehensions were not thus to

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be allayed, nor Archie's gloom to be dispelled, and it was only the daily visit of the doctor that broke up the tragic little conclave.

As the days went on without bringing an answer to Effie's second letter, the general gloom increased, and Mr. Fenwick's native cheerfulness deserted him as the disease made perceptible progress. He could still use his hands, but each day was oppressed with a haunting fear that its successor would find him unable to move a finger. Effie had moments of hope for his ultimate recovery, but they gradually became briefer and fewer, and the terror of Mrs. Foster's sway deepened even the shadow of her impending loss. Mr. Fenwick regretted the absence of the Floyds, who might have acted as a buffer between the bereaved minors and their natural guardian, whom he found more unnatural as the days of his life drew rapidly to a close. From outside sources he learned that his sister had gone to Scotland for the summer. He sent for a lawyer from town, and assured Effie that she should not go to her aunt. Other lawyers followed and were closeted with him in his room; neighbors called to inquire, and went away looking concerned. Even Mrs. Percival came

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in answer to a message delivered by the doctor, but Effie had been crying so long that day that she would see no one, and the old gentleman received his visitor alone. The lawyers came once more, and it was shortly after this last conference that Mr. Fenwick had his third stroke, and died without a further opportunity of reassuring his grandchildren, and the village and the hill were of one accord in showing their respect for the departed gentleman by attending his funeral. Mrs. Foster's lawyer also attended in behalf of his absent client, who had cabled her intention of returning at once, and every one pitied the poor children in the absence of their natural consoler and guide.

CHAPTER VIII

PROVES THE DEPLORABLE CONSEQUENCE OF TAKING A WINK FOR A BID

MRS. TREVOR leaned forward in her chair with excitement animating her lovely features. Her husband was standing before a tall clock, in an attitude of utter and dejected astonishment. Percival sat astride a tiny gilt and white chair with his hands clasped over the filigree back. His expression suggested hopeless resignation. Mrs. Beverly glanced from one to another in the hope of extricating herself from her bewilderment. "It's the most extraordinary thing!" she said. "I don't understand even yet how it could have happened."

"Well, as nearly as I can explain it," said Trevor, tugging at his moustache, "Mr. Fenwick, the inconsiderate old person whose funeral I attended under protest on Friday——"

"And an old friend of grandmamma's and Mrs. Percival's," his wife interpolated.

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"Yes, confound him! Well, as I was saying, Mr. Fenwick— Oh, see here, Sid, he must have been insane! The thing can't possibly hold. If the sister would only file a protest she could get her rights. Hang it, she must file a protest!"

"Oh, dear, what did he do?" cried Mrs. Beverly in tragic accents.

"He made a will—the most preposterous thing!" Trevor declared.

"Having apparently quarreled with his sister and only surviving relative," Percival added, staring at the ceiling.

"No, that's just the trouble. If she were the only surviving relative we shouldn't object in the least," said Trevor, "but she isn't. There are a quantity of grandchildren. How many, Sid?"

"Four, I believe," said Percival.

"And four guardians," said Mrs. Trevor. "I think myself it was a little odd in him not to consult us before taking such an important step, but he evidently had no time, poor thing!"

"Time?—he knew we wouldn't consent," said Trevor. "His dying just now was a piece of pure malice on his part. If he had lived he

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would have patched up his family difficulties instead of foisting them onto our shoulders."

"Mr. Percival, won't you tell me what this is all about?" Mrs. Beverly entreated, appealing to him as a last resort.

"I can try," said Percival, speaking in carefully measured tones. "This misguided old gentleman has conferred upon us the doubtful honor of appointing us joint guardians and trustees to his—well, er—grandchildren, and executors of the estate, to the exclusion of his sister, with whom, I understand, there were difficulties before his demise. The victims are Mr. and Mrs. Trevor, my mother and myself. He has set forth his reasons in writing—a sort of posthumous apology. Roy and I are to transact the necessary business, and mother and Clip are to exert the necessary influence in forming manners, and so forth. A lawyer waited upon me yesterday in town to inform me of the pleasing news, and of course I came here post-haste to see if you had heard it too. And that is all I know about it."

"But I didn't know that people could do such things without the consent of the persons involved," Mrs. Beverly objected. "Look on

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the bright side of things as long as you can. Perhaps the will isn't binding."

"That's what I say!" said Trevor. "The old fellow couldn't have been in his sane mind."

"Unfortunately our only evidence of that is the will itself," said Percival. "Everything else points the other way. He was particularly sane in the way he disposed of that last lot of meadow-land, and got a particularly pretty price for it."

"Can't we get out of it somehow? Why, it's fearful!" said Trevor, indignantly. "What did he mean by foisting off four children and their property on us to look after? I tell you, Sid, there must be some way of crawling out of it!"

"I'm afraid mother and I can't honestly do it," said Percival, regretfully. "You see, she owns that she did rather commit herself. She says she wanted to soothe his last moments, and she didn't believe he really meant it."

"That's all very well, but there is the old lady. Of course she will make a fuss," said Trevor with an access of hopefulness. "And I'm sure we shall none of us oppose her if she wants to break the will and have herself appointed guardian."

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“Unfortunately, he has left her something,” said Percival, “and she can hardly plead undue influence.”

“What induced the malicious old man to do such a thing?” Trevor demanded. “I’m sure I never gave him any encouragement!”

“Well, if you will pardon my being quite frank with you, I have no doubt that you did,” said Percival. “Now, honestly, didn’t you? Mother owns to it, and I dare say Clip might do the same. Perhaps I should have myself if he had attacked me on the subject, but he didn’t. The trouble is, one never expects to be taken *au pied de la lettre*. You were figurative, but the old gentleman was literal—distressingly so!”

“Of course it isn’t pleasant for you, but all the same you needn’t abuse him, poor old man!” said Mrs. Trevor. “He paid us the greatest compliment in his power.”

“Compliment? Base flattery!” said her husband with concentrated irony.

“As for abusing him, I’ve been remarkably moderate in the terms I have applied to his conduct,” said Percival. “And as for its not being pleasant for me—I trust you don’t labor

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under the delusion that the supervision of four uncivilized young persons is going to be especially delightful for you!"

"I'm sure he said they were all angels," said Mrs. Trevor, "and Roy came home quite enthusiastic about the girl the day he saw her. Perhaps it won't be so bad after all."

"There must be some way of throwing up the whole thing," Trevor persisted, turning appealingly to Percival. "I'm not particular about retreating gracefully, so long as I'm enabled to retreat at all."

"I don't think we have any right to retreat. Perhaps the aunt wasn't kind to them," said Mrs. Trevor.

"My dear girl, don't try to enlist my sympathies for them! Even you can't deny that we're in an impossible position," said Trevor. "We are standing between this old lady and her rights, and heaven knows it's through no preference of ours!"

"I dare say it is largely your own fault, as Mr. Percival suggests," said Mrs. Beverly, laughing unkindly. "When Mr. Fenwick broached the subject of his grandchildren to you, I've no doubt that you and Clip were so inviting and sympathetic and cordial that he

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was quite excusable for taking you at your word."

"Well, if I did say so, I didn't mean it, and he might have known it!" said Trevor, indefinitely.

Percival smiled involuntarily, and brought his eyes down from the ceiling to Mrs. Trevor's face. "Well, since to my regret the will appears to be legal and binding, it becomes clear that we ought to do something at once," he said. "Mother is willing to follow your lead in all things. Until Mrs. Foster does show a disposition to fight, we can't assume that she will."

"I suppose somebody ought to call there at once," said Mrs. Trevor in response to his interrogating glance. "Roy, you know them."

"I won't go," said Trevor flatly, "not even to oblige you."

"I can't go, for I have asked some people for tennis, and I am afraid they are coming," said Mrs. Trevor. "Sidney, will you?"

"Couldn't you go to-morrow?" he inquired.

"I haven't a moment to-morrow, or indeed this week. Really, Roy, I think you ought to go. It wouldn't be like seeing an absolute stranger."

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"Now, Sidney, you see how it is!" said Trevor. "You say I'm not to be trusted, and yet you thrust me into the very jaws of the lion. I know perfectly well that to get away in peace I shall promise them not only the half of my kingdom, but all of yours to boot. You'll have to go yourself."

Percival laughed, and made an impatient movement.

"I'm glad you can extract amusement from the situation," said Trevor. "Since the idea appears to please you so much, you might go this afternoon—convey our sympathy and all that sort of thing, and take an inventory of the family."

"And say that I am honestly coming next week, and come back and tell us all about it," said Mrs. Trevor. "You will be just in time for tea."

"Very well," said Percival with resignation. "As well one time as another."

"I suppose you will have to ask them here," said Mrs. Beverly, and a depressed silence ensued.

Mrs. Trevor was the first to rise to the occasion. "Well, fortunately, there is plenty of room," she said with a brave attempt at cheer-

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fulness. "I dare say we shall get along very well."

"We ought to take our share," said Percival. "Why not let them come to us?"

"No. You have the most room in town, and we have more here," said Mrs. Trevor. "Say that we are ready for them whenever they choose to come."

"But don't be misleadingly cordial!" Trevor entreated maliciously.

"That poor girl is there with no one to take care of her," said Mrs. Trevor, "and it's distinctly unkind not to invite her here. I know nothing about the rest, but I fancy we can manage about them. Really, Sidney, it's awfully good in you to go at all, but if you don't make haste we sha'n't have the pleasure of seeing you again this afternoon."

Percival rose with reluctance. "I shall make a blunder of it," he said, disparagingly. "However, I don't know that it makes any particular difference, so good-by for the present."

CHAPTER IX

HIS PRIVATE OPINION

IT was under no misapprehension as to the magnitude of his undertaking that Percival set forth on his mission, nor could he delude himself with hopes of being able to shirk the responsibilities thus thrust upon him, for he knew his coadjutors. Trevor was unwilling to manage even his own affairs, and Mrs. Trevor, though executive, was already overburdened with cares too heavy for her years.

If only his mother had been more discreet. If only they had given him a chance to get well started toward China! As he sat in the cheerless parlor, awaiting the advent of his wards, his position assumed an aspect of complete absurdity. Here he was, acting as deputy for the rest, usurping the place of an outraged natural guardian, empowered to make promises which were unlikely of fulfilment, unless

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he took matters into his own hands, and all with the utmost ignorance of everything connected with the unwelcome necessity which lay before him. Tired as he was of conducting his own affairs, he was still more averse to acting as deputy to other people, and in this uncongenial pursuit the greater part of his life had been passed. The Fenwicks assumed the proportions of white elephants as he considered their case in the unattractive parlor for fully fifteen minutes, during which time Effie was arraying herself in her one black gown and supererintending the cleansing and smoothing of the younger portion of the family.

When at length she descended, with much inward trepidation, marshaling the younger boys before her, Percival's patience was nearly exhausted, and he made no pretense of cordiality as she entered the room, shyly and blushingly furiously. She lacked the presence of mind even to bid him be seated, but stood with downcast eyes by the door, while the children stared curiously at the visitor.

Percival felt sorry for the girl in a general way, and cast about in his mind for a few words of polite condolence, which sounded

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very lame to him as he offered them, then, as she still remained standing, he placed a chair for her, having no intention of conducting a lengthy interview on his feet. "With your permission, I will sit down," he remarked with a certain discouragement. It appeared that the girl had no tongue.

"I didn't think!" said Effie. "Half the time I don't know what I'm doing, it has all been so dreadful!"

"Of course I realize that, and I am sorry to intrude on you, Miss Fenwick," said Percival, "but we thought there might be something we could do for you. My mother and Mrs. Trevor send their love and sympathy, and asked me to find out when you can see them. Mrs. Trevor was prevented from coming this afternoon, but she will be here next week without fail."

"It's very good in her," said Effie in a small voice.

"Of course you know the terms of Mr. Fenwick's will," said Percival. "You must pardon my alluding to it, but it is better that we should understand each other from the start. I heard of the arrangement only this morning, and we all feel that if you have any

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preferences in the matter they should be consulted at the outset. It would be only natural if you were to feel that you didn't care to be placed in the charge of strangers, and I hope you won't hesitate to speak frankly, for it might be possible to have the will changed by mutual consent."

"Oh, no, no indeed!" said Effie vehemently and tearfully. "You don't know Aunt Katherine. Oh, I couldn't bear it for a day! Grandpa said I needn't, and I sha'n't."

Percival was rather shocked by this sudden and violent outburst. "Pardon me. I had no idea you felt so strongly on the subject," he said. "I thought you might be glad to be with your own people. Later I believe Mrs. Trevor expects you to come to her for a while. I ought to tell you," he went on, "that in case you don't care to be where there is a good deal going on just now, you might find our house quieter than the Trevors'. My mother would be glad to see you at any time, and you should not be disturbed."

"Oh, I would rather be with Mrs. Trevor," said Effie, hastily.

"As you like," said Percival.

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"I know you consider us a great nuisance," said Effie. "My only consolation is that I know Mrs. Trevor is lovely, and will be good to me."

Percival laughed. "You won't find my mother an ogress either," he said.

"Aunt Katherine said all sorts of things about Mrs. Trevor," Effie went on, "as if she knew! But I'm sure I shall adore her."

Percival looked at her sharply and bit his lip. This was evidently not a discreet young person. "She's a charming woman," he said. "Unless you expect the impossible, you won't be disappointed in her."

"Yes, Grandpa said I should love her dearly, and since he is gone," said Effie, with a little choke in her voice, "there is no one I should be so glad to stay with."

"Perhaps you have plans of your own?" Percival hazarded. "Were you thinking of any particular school for the fall?"

"For the boys? I suppose they ought to go somewhere, though I don't know whether they will when it comes to the point," said Effie. "Archie, my eldest brother, you know, wants to go to college, but he never can pass on mathematics."

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"But with regard to yourself?" said Percival.

"Do you mean that I am to go to school?" Effie demanded indignantly, sitting bolt upright.

"I didn't know that you had finished your education," he replied a little argumentatively, for the boarding-school project was too good a one to be relinquished for light reasons.

"But I was eighteen my last birthday, and I'm sure Grandpa never sent me to school. It was Aunt Katherine who always talked about that," said Effie belligerently. "I'm sure, Mrs. Trevor was married at eighteen."

"Well, if you are married at eighteen I shall have nothing to say about your further movements," said Percival. "I had an idea that all girls wanted to go away to school."

"I have an idea that you don't know much about girls," said Effie, and then turned very red at her own daring.

Percival laughed. "I am likely to learn," he said. It occurred to her that he was laughing, not at the brilliancy of her repartee, but at her awkwardness in making it, and this suspicion did not enhance his attractions in her eyes.

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“What do you expect to do with yourself if you don’t go to school?” he asked.

“What do other people do? They go to places, don’t they?” said Effie with asperity.

“But while you are in mourning?” he objected. “I’m afraid you will find time hang very heavy on your hands.”

“I don’t care. I won’t go to school,” said Effie. “Did Mrs. Trevor go to school?”

“Oh, well, you can discuss that with her,” said Percival hopelessly.

“She wouldn’t advise anything so horrid,” said Effie, “and neither would Mr. Trevor. I see plainly that you are the one who is going to make it hard for me.”

Percival found this unanswerable, and fortunately at that moment Archie came in to discuss his own projects. Meanwhile at Fortmounthouse his arrival was awaited with impatience. Bobby Floyd had scented news from afar, and was arguing with Mrs. Beverly on the outcome of events. Trevor lay on a bamboo sofa in the morning-room, reading a French novel. He turned on his cushions with a sigh which betokened comfort of a high order. Evidently he had succeeded in forgetting the Fenwicks. If this were the case it

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was most inconsiderate in his wife to recall them to his mind, as she presently did. Seating herself on the edge of the sofa, and folding her hands in her lap, she observed, "Now, Roy, if you don't mind, I must talk to you for a few minutes."

"Ah, why can't you let me forget them in comfort?" he said, reproachfully.

"When we have talked it all over once, it won't be necessary to mention it again," she reminded him.

"If you want my opinion on the subject, I tell you frankly that beyond considering it a beastly bore, I have no opinion whatever," said her husband.

"I suppose you don't really mind having them here for a while? They needn't interfere with you, you know," said Mrs. Trevor.

"I mind very decidedly, but that is all the good it will do! We existed in peace without them, which is more than we are likely to do with them. Their advent means that Sidney will be busier than ever, and of no earthly good to any one, and that you will be monopolized and neglect me shamefully. There will be no more joy beneath my own vine and fig-tree, because of that doddering old imbecile

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and his precious 'four-in-hand.' Spare me, Clip, spare me!"

"I have never neglected you, even for baby," said Mrs. Trevor, taking his book away from him, "but how can you expect my undivided attention when you won't give me yours?"

Trevor threw his arm around her. "We have been so comfortable!" he sighed regretfully, as though comfort were already a thing of the past.

"Well, since it can't be helped, there is nothing to do but make the best of it," she answered. "I doubt your being bothered much with it after all."

"Oh, I sha'n't be if I can help myself," he agreed with an access of cheerfulness. "But I hate to have you devoting all your time to them, and you will, you know."

"Do you think I neglect you, dear?" she asked, appealingly. "There are always so many things to be done, and somebody must do them. Often and often, when I would rather be with you, there is some tiresome matter that must be settled first. Other people can't do it for us, and when it is expected of us we can't disappoint everybody. As it is,

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we impose on Sidney. I hate to have him do so much for us."

"Just running about!" said Trevor, slipping the rings up and down on her fingers. "He doesn't mind it. He's one of those people who would rather shoulder another person's responsibilities than let them go begging. Thank heaven, I'm not."

"I've thought of rooms for all except the little boys," said Mrs. Trevor, "and what shall I do with them?"

"Kill them," said Trevor.

"Darling, you're shocking, and besides, you make such useless suggestions," she expostulated. "Dear me, why doesn't Sidney come?"

"You're a heartless little wretch to indicate so plainly that you're tired of me already," said Trevor. "It is all the fault of those red-headed imps. Why on earth you didn't clutch at the chance of sending them at once to the Percivals' I am at a loss to conjecture, but let us dismiss the painful subject." He drew her hand across his lips, and was caught in the act by Mr. Floyd, who entered indiscreetly.

"We are waiting for Sidney," said Trevor, reluctantly quitting his lounge.

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"Oh, yes, where is he?" Mr. Floyd demanded.

"Perhaps he is performing his duty too conscientiously," Trevor suggested. "He's very thorough."

"She must be an uncommonly fetching girl!" said Bobby with conviction. "What's her style?"

"Well, she's not tall," said Trevor. "She's not thin. She has pretty features, nice complexion, and red hair."

"That is lovely if it's not too red," said Mrs. Trevor.

"But it generally is," said her husband.

No one having the energy to dispute this statement, a silence ensued, broken at length by Bobby, who remarked with resignation, "Well?"

"Ring for tea. That may bring him," said Trevor.

"There are wheels now," said Mrs. Beverly.

A moment later Percival entered the room and seated himself provisionally upon an ottoman, with an air of intense dejection.

"Don't keep us in suspense. We want to hear your adventures, you know," Mrs. Trevor reminded him.

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"In the form of a drama," her husband added.

"No, don't turn serious matters into a farce," said Mrs. Beverly.

"My dear friend, that is precisely the thing I intend to do if I possibly can," said Trevor. "Go on, Sidney. Act first, scene first."

"Oh, very well," said Percival, obediently. "Act first, scene first: the outside of a house. A new stanhope and two restless horses standing in a foot of mud under a varnish-blistering sun, while a patient and long-suffering stranger rings the door bell three times at intervals of five minutes."

"Very touching. I'm glad I didn't go. Scene second?" said Trevor.

"A parlor," said Percival, "with fly-specked engravings, haircloth furniture, worsted mats of a bright Hibernian green, and plaster of Paris ornaments like dirty meringues. The stranger seats himself in a chair by the window, hooks his heels into a couple of convenient holes in the carpet, and waits. Enter heroine, surrounded with healthy-looking children. She accords her visitor a welcome, which, in this weather, has the merit of

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being cool, and after some preliminary skirmishing they proceed to business."

"Hold on a minute. How does she look?" Bobby inquired, eagerly. "I hear she's a stunner."

"You will soon have an opportunity of judging for yourself," said Percival.

"She seemed a nice enough little thing when I saw her," said Trevor. "Very fresh and artless, and all that."

"It wouldn't be fair in me to judge her by what I saw this afternoon," said Percival. "Of course it must have been very trying to her. I know I felt like a reporter."

"Did you interview her?" Mr. Floyd inquired with lively anticipation.

"I'm afraid I did," Percival admitted, reluctantly. "I really didn't know what to say to her. And she—well, she naturally resented it."

"Showed temper, eh?" Mr. Floyd surmised. "Red hair!"

"Don't be uncharitable. They may succeed in making something of her yet," said Mrs. Beverly, as one might speak of a hopeless reprobate.

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Percival made no response, but looked extremely dubious.

"It really isn't so hopeless for you. You can pack her off to school, you know," she went on encouragingly.

"She won't go," he replied, sadly.

"Won't go? Then she evidently considers herself finished," said Mrs. Beverly. "I understand her grandfather considered her quite a paragon."

"Well, tastes differ," said Percival. "She may be one."

"The only thing that now remains," said Mrs. Trevor with a sigh, "is to tell us that her manners are bad."

"I don't think you could call them good," said Percival, thoughtfully.

"Well, let us have the rest," said Trevor, dismissing poor Effie for the nonce with a wave of his hand.

"There is Archie," said Percival, "a youth with an excellent opinion of himself, brilliant hair, and an incipient moustache. He is willing to try Yale, and I had no scruples about assuring him that he should have every opportunity of making the experiment."

"An excellent way of disposing of him

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for the next four years," said Trevor, approvingly.

"If they let him stay so long," said Bobby, significantly. "What next?"

"There are some things that should be passed over in silence," Percival answered. "Two of them. I strongly advocate a distant boarding-school or a hogshead for both."

"It is quite plain that Miss Fenwick has failed to create a favorable impression on you," said Mrs. Beverly.

"No doubt she returns my feelings with interest," said Percival, indifferently. "I delivered your various messages, and came away with the cheering conviction that I had made a blunder of the whole thing. And now, while we may, let us talk of something else."

Mrs. Trevor, who had been reflecting in silence for the past few moments, now spoke with compunction. "Do you know, I'm ashamed of myself. Poor thing! We are discussing her as though she were a hideous sofa that could only be tucked out of sight in the garret, but I suppose she has feelings, for all that. Suppose grandmamma had left me all alone like this, and the only relation I had in the world had quarreled with the family!"

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“By the way, she bursts into tears at the very mention of the aunt’s name,” said Percival.

“Then the aunt can’t be at all the proper person to take charge of her,” said Mrs. Trevor with decision. “And when I remember how I dreaded the thought of going away to school——”

“But, my dear girl, you might have liked it!” her husband interrupted.

“Well, I’m very, very sorry for them all, but most of all for Effie,” said Mrs. Trevor, “and I’m not going to speak of her any more as I have this afternoon. Bobby, will you ring for tea? And when she comes, I hope you will all remember that she’s alone in the world, and be just as nice to her as you can.”

“I suppose it’s not her fault that she’s a nuisance,” said Percival, sadly.

“And as she’s not an impecunious orphan, you will have no difficulty in marrying her off in her first season,” said Mrs. Beverly consolingly.

“In about a week,” said Trevor, sadly, “this festive tea-table—or rather, the place where this festive tea-table ought to be—will be enlivened by four—well, out of regard for

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Clip's feelings we will call them pink-headed Fenwicks. We shall have to alter our habits, our conversation, our convictions—for all I know we may be obliged to reform—and all for the senile whim of a——”

“Ah, thank heaven,” Bobby interrupted, “here comes Burke with tea!”

CHAPTER X

A THUNDER-STORM

BEING a person of her word, Mrs. Trevor allowed no grass to grow under her feet when once she had announced her friendly intentions toward the Fenwicks, and nothing could have been more cordial or reassuring than her manner of taking the helm. Her manner suggested little of that executive ability which was the salvation of her lazy husband and the admiration of her friends. She was radiantly youthful, softly appealing, with an air of confiding the inmost secrets of her soul to her flattered listener. If, as Effie had heard, she were a very proud woman, if the inflexible spirit of the late Madam Trevor animated this exquisitely incongruous tenement, the fact was admirably disguised.

The transplanting of the Fenwick family was effected with less friction than might have been expected, for when Mrs. Trevor deter-

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mined to make the best of a bad business, few could fall in with the decrees of fate more gracefully than this resolute young woman. She did not cope quite single-handed with the situation, for Percival, moved by her plight, succeeded in melting the obduracy of Robin and Henry with regard to stabling their piebald goat in their bedroom, and frequently took them fishing or sailing. As for the other guardians, Trevor was becoming convinced that nothing was expected of him, and Mrs. Percival airily ignored the situation.

Apart from the fact that few people can remain indifferent to a fervent admiration, Mrs. Trevor had found Effie companionable, warm-hearted, honest, and eager to please, and her sympathies were genuinely enlisted in behalf of the girl so curiously thrown into her charge. She had besides the longing of a capable woman to "form" the young person whose devotion made her adaptable and imitative, and in a short time she felt that she could point with pride to the results of her training. Effie was sitting by a window in the great hall, watching the tiny sails on the river below, as they scurried before a gathering thunderstorm, like a flock of bewildered geese. The

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strong wind blew eddies of dust along the formal paths of the Dutch garden, and the borders of marigolds and larkspur bent almost to the gravel. Up the terraced lawn and under the arches which spanned the converging walks Mrs. Beverly and Jim Trevor came running, but the great drops were splashing on the flagstones by the *porte-cochère* before they reached its shelter. The willow trees lashed, and the wicker chairs on the piazza rocked, while the servants hurried about, dragging rugs and cushions under shelter. In the broad window-seat at the opposite side of the hall Mrs. Trevor and Percival were sitting in one of those intervals of silence which are tolerable only when two people know each other extremely well. The beauty's eyes rested with satisfaction on Effie's trim outlines, shown to their best advantage in a white frock which was the quintessence of smart simplicity. Her hair, too, in defiance of Mrs. Foster's mandates, was elaborately waved at top and sides, and dressed low in her neck with a huge black bow. There were little curls around her face, and her general appearance was such as to make her feel at peace with all the world. It is true that she would have been happier at the mo-

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ment if Percival, on his way home from the golf-course, had not come in to wait until the storm blew over, but that was only a temporary eclipse of her general satisfaction with her surroundings. She loved the great house, the deferential servants, the ceremony and the luxury; she loved the glimpses of gayety from which even her mourning could not altogether debar her, the atmosphere of youth and pleasure; above all she loved the beauty, who seemed to her the fairy godmother who had rescued her from her dragon of a great-aunt. So she contented herself by remaining at a distance during Percival's frequent visits, and thanked heaven that she saw no more of him.

"How you frightened me, all for nothing!" said Mrs. Trevor finally, as the girl left the room to speak to Mrs. Beverly. "You gave me the impression that she was hopeless, and I own to you now that I was in despair. Where were your eyes? Did you ever see any one wear her clothes better, or look prettier when she is properly dressed?"

"She looks different, certainly," he admitted.

"But don't you think she is nice?"

"She never speaks to me," said Percival.

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"Now, Sidney, have you taken one of your absurd prejudices? You said yourself that you ought not to judge her by that first interview. The poor child was horribly embarrassed. She has told me about it."

"I fear she has taken one of her prejudices against me," said Percival. "It may not be absurd, however."

"But couldn't you see that she was pretty?"

"I don't think I looked at her. I didn't like to stare, and anyhow, it never occurred to me"

"Well, look at her now, standing on the piazza. She can't see you."

"She's all well enough," said Percival, "but nobody would look twice at her besides you and Spriggy. If you want to make a beauty of her you should get a plain woman to chaperon her."

"Can't you forgive her for altering your plans? I know you wanted to go to China, but that doesn't make her unattractive, does it?"

"I've just had another letter from Mrs. Foster," said Percival. "She still maintains that we are iniquitously withholding her natural

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privileges from her. It requires an answer. What do you want me to say?"

"Conciliate her as far as possible, but don't give in to her," said Mrs. Trevor. "Effie is going to be happy while she is young, if I can accomplish it for her. I don't want her to be obliged to marry in order to do as she likes—and then probably be disappointed."

"It is the common lot," said Percival. "However, you seem to succeed where other people fail. Am I to tell Mrs. Foster, then, that Miss Fenwick is well and happy, and does not desire to make a change?"

"It isn't fair that all the interviewing and writing to that unpleasant old lady should fall on you," said Mrs. Trevor, remorsefully. "You can never come here nowadays without being asked to do something troublesome. You shouldn't make it so easy for us to impose upon you. It is not alone this trustee business, but everything else as well. You wear yourself out in our service—as though you hadn't enough of your own to keep you busy."

"My dear friend, don't talk nonsense," said Percival. "What do I do that you and Roy don't do for me? In fact, it's awfully good of

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you to let me hang about the house in this way. If you will only let me be of some use, instead of an unmitigated nuisance, I shall feel more comfortable."

"That is what you say to Roy, and I wish you would not. He believes you," said Mrs. Trevor, "and I don't. We want you to feel at home here, and we do not expect you to attend to all the disagreeable matters which we are too lazy or selfish to settle ourselves. Sometimes I am sorry you didn't go away as you intended, and force us to do our duty, instead of foisting it all on you."

"This is a dreadful frame of mind," said Percival, "and you are not making home happy for me. I'm deeply gratified, though. It is the first time I have ever been accused of overzealousness in my calling."

"If it were even for your own people—" she persisted.

"You are as much my own people as any I am ever likely to have," he said.

"And I know how much you wanted to get away."

"You are too good to me, Clip. If you will only manage to keep happy, that is the best thing you can do for me." He laughed as he

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spoke, turning what might have been serious into a mere pretty speech, and as such and no more the beauty received it serenely.

“Don’t you want to see your godson’s new tooth?” she asked, and headed a devotional pilgrimage to the nursery.

CHAPTER XI

A CHANGE OF AIR

THE dusk was shrill with the first crickets, and the turf that bordered the piazzas was drenched with dew, as Miss Fenwick's skirts attested. She had been for a postprandial stroll with Trevor, down to the bluff, through the rose-garden, and home by the north gate, while the matrons of the party engaged in their endless chit-chat about people as yet unknown to her, and young Jim and Percival talked horse, dawdling up and down on the gravel. Now the lights were burning low in the hall, and a gusty damp wind scattered the petals of the late roses in their bowls on the wicker tables. It was not a comfortable night. The atmosphere was fraught with something intangibly restless and ominous. Mrs. Beverly was to leave Fortmounthouse the following morning. It now occurred to Effie that it had been rather unprecedented in Trevor not to choose her for his companion on this last evening of her stay, and the omission gave her a lurking satisfaction. Trevor was far nicer

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away from her, and talked about things that one could understand, without any of those irritating references to people and places which smote unfamiliarly upon the young person's ear, and which were now wafted to her as she ascended the shallow flight of steps which led to the piazza. "I'm glad she is going, and we shall be by ourselves," she was thinking, when a threatening little tag of a sentence arrested her attention. Mrs. Beverly had said, "But you can let me know about that when you write from Newport."

At the door Mrs. Trevor joined her and slipped her hand through the young person's arm, while her husband subsided into her vacant chair, the end of his cigar glowing in the dark under the honeysuckles. Effie's uneasiness deepened. She knew something was going to happen.

"Well, it is really settled at last," the beauty began. "Until an hour ago I could not induce Roy to make up his mind, but he has finally decided that he will go to the Winchesters' with me for a fortnight, and then join Herries Duane on a cruise to Bar Harbor and meet me at the Melvilles' the first week in September. It is a great relief to have him know

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his own mind at length, for these few visits have been hanging over our heads for two years, and he does so hate stopping with older people who expect to make his engagements for him. So we go to Newport next week. Of course I shall be coming back often to see the baby—Spriggy has promised to look at him every day—but there will be no one left here but Jim, so Mrs. Percival would like to have you make her that visit you promised—you and Archie and the children.”

Effie’s lip quivered. “I didn’t expect you would really go,” she said.

“Neither did I, Roy is so uncertain, and I hate to go without him, but if I don’t take advantage of this mood it may be two years more before it comes again. I wish you were going too,” Mrs. Trevor added. “You would have such a good time. But of course, until you regularly come out, it is better not to be too much in evidence. Mrs. Percival is one of the most delightful people to stay with. I’ve no doubt you will enjoy yourself more than I shall.”

“Oh, yes, she is very nice,” said Effie, dolefully, “but I shall miss you dreadfully, and besides, I would rather go anywhere else.”

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“Oh, my dear, as though it made any difference what happened months ago! Do you suppose he remembers it?” the beauty asked. “And what was it to begin with but a question of boarding-school? You know you have been on perfectly good terms since then, and he is really anxious to make things as pleasant for you as possible.”

“I wish there were no such thing as going away,” cried Miss Fenwick.

“Sometimes I wish so too,” said Mrs. Trevor, rather dismally, “although people would get very tired of each other if there were not.” The pacing footsteps on the gravel had ceased and three fiery eyes glowed in the corner under the honeysuckles. “Your slippers must be wet, Effie. Hadn’t you better change them?”

Miss Fenwick slipped up-stairs to repair the damages that the dampness had wrought in her usually charming appearance and returned some time later in a state of mind so nearly tragic that she hated the thought of facing the others in the music-room, where she could hear Mrs. Beverly’s practised fingers trilling out an accompaniment to one of her own songs. The library door stood open, with

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no light but the gray from outside, and no sooner had she crossed the threshold than the tears which had been trembling on the verge for some time burst forth unchecked, bidding fair to make a little pool on the table where she leaned her head.

The click of one of the French windows roused her from her lamentations, and to her intense chagrin she beheld Percival's unmistakable figure outlined against the dusk. She sat quite still, hoping to escape his observation as he covered the intervening space, but unfortunately he was bound for the table at which she sat, and an uncontrollable sniff betrayed her presence even before he reached her. Since her arrival at Fortmounthouse she had not exchanged a dozen words with him, nor had he shown a desire for a more intimate acquaintance. All necessary negotiations between them had been carried on by the diplomatist Mrs. Trevor, and if there had been no further clash, neither did the former foes show evidence of desiring to stray in the paths of peace. Ordinarily he would have remarked that it was very damp and promptly left her to her own devices, but the very patent sniff and the sense of his impending increase of re-

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sponsibility now urged him to say, "I'm afraid you are upset about something."

"Anybody might be," she answered in an aggrieved tone, and pushed her chair back.

"Don't let me drive you away. I only came in for some wind-matches," he said, hastily. "I hope it is nothing serious?"

"It's quite serious enough, though I suppose you think I ought to be enchanted," the young person observed defiantly.

"I'm sure I don't know what you mean," said Percival.

"Perhaps you don't know that we are going to make you a visit?" she hazarded.

"We are looking forward to it with great pleasure, I assure you," said Percival.

"Oh, you needn't try to be polite, for I know you hate it as much as we do," she went on, checking the course of a tear that meandered down her cheek. "And you needn't laugh, either."

"I am not laughing. Nothing is further from my thoughts," he protested. "Would you mind telling me what I have done to offend you?"

Effie was put to her trumps to answer this question, and ended by saying nothing, but it was an accusing silence.

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“If all this unhappiness is due to the prospect of spending a few weeks under the same roof with me,” he finally remarked, “I beg you to believe that you are troubling yourself unnecessarily. I am very little at home in any case, and I can always go away.”

“Oh, if you only would!” said Effie.

At this aggressively rude speech Percival could not forbear a smile, though his gravity up to that point had been admirable, and Effie, who always suspected him of finding her ridiculous, waxed scarlet and furious and allowed him to leave the room without striving to mitigate her incivility. Nevertheless, as she sat weeping on the divan, it dawned upon her that it was somewhat unprecedented behavior to request a man to leave his own house, and that common decency required an apology from her reluctant lips. Presently she dried her eyes and listened to Mrs. Beverly's contralto, first vailed, then throbbing out on the stillness:

“I have brought poppies for thee, weary heart—

White poppies heavy with sleep.

Ask God if He'll give thee ere we part

One little dream to keep.

Then sleep, sleep !

Why should we wake to weep ? ”

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"That's a very silly song," the young person observed vindictively to Jim, who came in search of her.

In spite of her red eyes and her aversion for dreary songs, Effie had followed her companion into the hall and stood looking in at the quartet in the music-room. Trevor was standing by the piano. Percival was studying the design of the side brackets over Mrs. Trevor's head. He was the first to break the silence by remarking, thoughtfully and impersonally, "Yes, one is capable of any folly when one doesn't sleep."

Mrs. Beverly rose and gathered up her music. "I may be in the proper state to commit a dozen by morning," she said, "but at least, at the unconscionable hour at which I start, they will have no spectators. I may embrace the shrubbery and cast myself full length upon the beloved croquet ground, but you will all be sleeping peacefully and will never be the wiser. And in view of my horrid departure I'm going to retire."

"It's a shocking train," Trevor protested.

"How can I reach Pride's to-morrow by any other?—and I with relatives-in-law expected!" she demanded. "Oh, it's of no use.

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We might stay talking here until doomsday, and still there would be only one thing to say—and that is, Good-by.”

“I shall get up,” Trevor announced with heroism. He followed her to the foot of the stairs. After a while Mrs. Trevor and Jim joined them. There seemed to be so much to say, and so short a time to say it in, that their lips could utter only trivialities, still, “She feels badly about going,” Effie reflected. Then she noticed that she was left alone with Percival, and seized the bull by the horns.

“Mr. Percival,” she said with hasty courage, “I ought not to have said that. I—I hope you won’t go on my account.”

“Not if I have your permission to stay,” said her guardian politely, and, it is to be feared, mendaciously, for never had he considered her a greater thorn in the flesh.

Trevor came back and lit a fresh cigar. “We’re all blue and grouty,” he said, “but you needn’t look as if you had lost your last friend, Effie. You are not bound for the delights of Mother Winchester’s. Gad, how I wish I had never agreed to make those infernal visits!”

“So do I,” said Effie, mournfully.

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“But you mustn’t cry about it, you know,” he said paternally and drew her out on to the piazza once more, regardless of the fact that the friend of the family was left alone. “It’s awfully good of you to care whether we go or stay, but we can’t let you spoil your eyes. Thank heaven, it won’t last forever, and I’ll send you something nice every day if you’ll only make the best of it and not mope.”

“I wish I didn’t always show it when I cared,” said Effie. “Everybody thinks you so foolish.”

“I like to see a woman show some feeling,” he assured her. “There are few enough of them who do.”

CHAPTER XII

IN THE ENEMY'S COUNTRY

THE Fenwicks had been installed for a week at The Cedars, and the younger portion of the family was making itself extremely at home. Now, as Effie sat with her hostess on the piazza watching the moon rise, Robin and Henry sped round and round the fountain in pursuit of their piebald goat, while their nurse from the path vainly lured them bedward. Percival, the only person whose mandates they pretended to heed, was lingering over his cigar in the dining-room, having dined at home for the first time since his wards' arrival. Archie remained with him, puffing a cigarette—Archie in immaculate evening dress and with a lordly and sophisticated air, discoursing knowingly of sporting life, the quality of his guardian's sherry, the latest gossip of the Club as retailed by Mr. Floyd. "By the way, I suppose you've got your tickets for Tuesday night?" he remarked. "Bobby says they will sell only a

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limited number, and of course there will be a rush for them by people from town."

"You mean Crowley and Moore, I suppose?" said Percival. "No, I wouldn't be hired to go. Salter's is worse ventilated than the Black Hole of Calcutta. I don't fancy a crowd in the dog-days, even if the show is something I care about."

"But it's going to be the biggest fight you ever saw!" Archie protested, quite scandalized at his guardian's indifference. "If Moore can lick Kid Gruman he can certainly stand up to Crowley. I say he ought to be good for fifteen rounds, though Bobby heard from a man who knows him that he isn't in as good training as when he fought Gruman."

"It is a nuisance having it so near," said Percival. "Every stable boy in the place will be drunk, and poor old Rowson will break the pledge for the twentieth time unless I invent some pretext for sending him to town the day before. It is always so when there's a slugging match."

"I'm surprised you are not going," Archie persisted. "I wouldn't miss it for my best girl."

"Without wishing to appear officious," said

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Percival, "I would suggest that it might be as well if you and Jim didn't figure as patrons of the prize-ring. There was some talk of this last spring, and the Trevors didn't fancy any of their people countenancing the thing. In fact, they feel rather strongly about Salter's, and so do most of the property owners. There's no sense in attracting toughs from all over the State to turn Fortmounthouse into a second Coney Island. Besides, the police are likely to interfere."

"Oh, they'll be squared all right," said Archie.

"Possibly," his guardian agreed. "Personally I should not care to make the experiment. Are you going to the Club to-night?"

"I rather promised Miss Brent to take her out on the water," said Archie with a conquering air. "How about you?"

"If possible I shall find out what I want to do, and then do it," said Percival, and strolled outside to join the ladies, of whom he found but one awaiting him on the piazza.

"Where is Miss Fenwick?" he asked.

"Walking up and down all by herself. The poor child is lonely. I must ask some other girls to stay here. I would invite Mary," said

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Mrs. Percival, "but Mrs. Van Rensselaer is always so alarmed about Jim, and really, that wretched boy would be a thorn in any mother's side. I am always afraid of his taking one of his fancies to Effie."

"Don't suggest any more horrible complications than we are already called upon to cope with!" her son entreated.

"But we all know that he makes love to every woman he sees," Mrs. Percival persisted, "and he certainly 'has a way with him.' There goes the poor child now. If you are not going out, why don't you join her for a little? She said she had never been to the Alley, so you might walk down to the summer-house and back. I don't like to take her to the Club every evening."

Percival would have preferred to stroll through the shrubberies with Mrs. Townshend, who was amusing and civil, and had the faculty of talking well to half a dozen men at once. However, he relinquished his project, took the little wrap which his mother gave him, and invited his young guest to visit the summer-house in his society. Effie, who since her latest rudeness stood in some fear of repeating the offense, accepted the offer with as little

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effusion as prompted it, and they set forth for the Alley, a gravel walk hedged in on both sides with overarching elms. The original purport of this path was not quite clear, as the damp Chinese pagoda in which it terminated dated back no further than the most eccentric days of the late Mr. Percival, but the trees were fine, and the long secluded alley offered ample facilities for a flirtation. These golden opportunities were unfortunately quite wasted on Percival and his companion. Seldom had two young people issued forth more reluctantly to a *tête-à-tête* on a fine summer evening. The moon shone through a mist and cast bars of dim yellow light through the branches of the elms on to the level graveled floor. It fell upon Miss Fenwick's becoming coiffure, and on a little patch of plump white throat encircled by a black velvet band, above her new gown of black net. She might have been old and ugly for all the effect her charms produced upon him, and she was resentfully conscious of the fact.

"How have you been amusing yourself since I saw you last?" he asked with a polite assumption of interest.

"I have done nothing but drive. Kate

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Porter came to see me yesterday. I don't expect to have a good time until Clip comes home," she replied with far greater frankness.

"Why don't you try that little bay mare of my mother's? She is as gentle as a dove," said Percival. "Mrs. Townshend is riding every morning now. You might go with her."

"I don't know how to ride," said Effie.

"You would soon learn. Rowson might teach you until you gain confidence to go out on the road," he suggested. Since she was his guest it was plainly his duty to provide entertainment for her, and if it could be combined with much-needed instruction, so much the better.

"And have you laugh at my blunders? No, I thank you!" said Effie with decision.

"I should probably find nothing to laugh at," said Percival. "Well, here is the summer-house. It isn't much of a sight."

"It's the nicest thing I've seen since I came here," said the contrary-minded young woman, "and so cool! I'm going to sit down here and shake the gravel out of my shoes."

Percival concealed a smile as she proceeded to execute her threat. Perhaps she desired to display her slippers, which had very high heels

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and jettied rosettes. Perhaps she was merely uncomfortable. At all events, she removed them both, shook them, and replaced them. "I am glad that you find something to your taste," he observed, as she leaned back against a fantastic pillar, flushed with stooping.

"Well, you can't pretend that you keep your place up the way the Trevors do," she replied.

"No, it isn't a show place."

"It might be made one, though it *is* so much hotter," said Effie, irrelevantly, "but you don't care."

"No, you are quite right. I don't," said Percival. "This roof I see has been leaking, but nobody comes here once a year, so why should I have it repaired?"

"I don't think you have very good taste then," she declared. "It's the dearest little house I ever saw, and if it were mine I should sit here every night."

"You would get the rheumatism," said Percival unromantically, "and the chorus of frogs from the brook is enough to give one the horrors."

"You must have a very bad conscience," she said, severely.

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"In order to appreciate rural delights, it isn't enough to be good and happy, one should *always* have been so," said Percival. "Now, though I am at present the model that you see me, I confess I don't like to be left alone with the frogs and crickets, and whippoorwills goad me to frenzy."

"Well, if I were a man I should think myself very cowardly if I were afraid to be alone," she announced.

"So I do," said Percival.

"Now I suppose you are angry. I shall never learn not to say what I think," said Effie.

"Angry? Not in the least," he protested.

"Then it is because you don't care what I say. If I were somebody else it might make a difference," said Effie, hotly. "It isn't worth while losing your temper with a person of no consequence."

"That you certainly are not," he answered, blandly. "You are in no danger of being overlooked, and you have the courage of your convictions, Miss Fenwick."

"There it is again!" said Effie, accusingly. "I've heard you talk to Mrs. Townshend and Clip. You don't sneer at *them*."

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Percival seated himself on the bench opposite her with an air of reluctant determination. "Now suppose we have it out," he proposed. "I am not without my own grievances. You will persist in misunderstanding me. I had not the remotest idea of sneering at you, but if I were to protest my innocence from now until doomsday I shouldn't succeed in convincing you of it. You dislike me—that is patent to every observer—and much as I regret the fact, I can't criticize your taste. What I do propose to request of you is that you give me a list of a few safe topics of conversation, so that in future, when it is necessary for us to exchange ideas, I may be able to avoid offending you. If I am to confine my remarks to the weather, well and good. If you will give me a little more latitude, so much the better."

"As if I could tell you!" Effie exclaimed, indignantly.

"Well, I can see no other course open to us. We are thrown continually together. For the sake of the conventionalities we must exchange a few words when we meet, and really," said Percival, "I don't know how it is with you, but I prefer hypocrisy to perpetual

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wrangling. So if you will give a sort of black-list of the subjects that are tabooed, we might manage to pull along without quite so much bloodshed, and save the appearances."

"You are very unkind," said Effie. "You know that I'm awkward and stupid, and can't do the things that you can do, and so you make fun of me. I thought it was going to be so nice, but now, oh dear! everybody is snippy, and nobody cares for me but Clip, and she's gone."

Percival looked hopeless. Here was certainly a most impossible young person. Why had he not pleaded a previous engagement when his mother had captured him on the piazza? And now, when he raised his eyes, he saw that the girl was glaring at him, and evidently expecting him to proceed. A poignant pity for Mrs. Trevor and his mother overwhelmed him, and he resolved if possible to lighten their educational burdens by an appeal to their charge's better feelings. "You are very fond of Mrs. Trevor, are you not?" he asked with unexceptionable gravity.

"I love her better than any one in the world. I'm afraid I love her more than I do

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Archie," said Effie, fervently. "Oh, you have no idea how perfectly angelic she has been to me!"

"Then don't you think that for her sake you might try to be a little more patient when people have the misfortune to displease you?" he inquired. "You can't expect every one to know your inmost thoughts and fight shy of your particular foibles. We must all listen to unpleasant things and look as though we liked them. Just take them as they come, and don't give the other person the satisfaction or the pain, as the case may be, of seeing you fly into a temper over them. You can always console yourself with the reflection that probably what you have said hit just as hard."

"My calling you a coward, for instance," said Effie.

"I wasn't referring especially to that," said Percival. "It is a term I so often apply to myself that I take it quite easily."

"Not really?" she said in amazement.

"It surprises you, doesn't it, to find that we are agreed on any subject?" he asked.

"Do you honestly think that Clip would be pleased if I told you what not to say?" Effie inquired. "I would be cut into little pieces for

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her, if it would do any good. And she wants me to tell her everything, just as if she were my own sister. Oh, it is so good to feel that there is one person in the world whom you can trust for everything!"

Percival looked at her again. Her face was very earnest in the moonlight; her hands were clasped in her lap. She seemed appreciative in one direction. Perhaps there was a little hope for her after all. "I am sure," he said aloud, "that you will never find a truer friend than Mrs. Trevor."

"And until she comes back, I can't help being lonely and unhappy," said Effie with desolation in her voice. "Kate may talk all she likes about its being so delightful to be here, but I'm sure I'd give it all for one sight of Clip's face again."

"Well, a month can be a long time, I admit," said Percival, absently.

"It's all very well for you to say so," Effie began, "but if you missed her as I do—" She broke off suddenly in some confusion, remembering her aunt's plain statements, and rose hastily from her bench. "I won't stay here any longer, I think," she said. "Your mother will be dreadfully lonely. Archie was going

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to the Club, and I thought I heard Jim come up the drive."

Percival walked beside her as she hastened up the Alley. Jim and Archie were just leaving the house. The young man greeted Effie with effusion, and complimented her on her attire, while Percival, having done his duty, escaped to Mrs. Townshend's.

Miss Fenwick should not have been lonely at The Cedars, for the younger Trevor haunted the place at all hours. Percival, whose knowledge of the young man's habits was full and of long standing, did not smile upon these matutinal visits, and was not over cordial when his handsome head emerged from the shadow of Effie's white parasol or reclined against the cushions of the hammock. "Run along, Child," he said, inhospitably, as he came upon the pair under the shade of a clump of willows by the fountain. "There are three well-seasoned veterans waiting for you on the Club House steps, and each one says she has an appointment with you. I'm going to the station now. Can you give me a lift?"

"No, thanks. They will fall upon me and rend me. It's safer here," Jim replied with an

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engaging smile. "Going up to town? They say it's cooler there than here."

"I want to see you, though, before I go," said Percival. "Miss Fenwick is quite tired of you. She has had you all the morning. Come, Child, see me off."

"Only too delighted, I'm sure," the young man muttered after his host's retreating form. "Sid's a precious good fellow when he hasn't some idea or other in his head, but just now I wish he would go yachting. When is he coming back, do you know?"

"His mother says not until Friday," said Effie with an air of superb indifference.

"It's just as well," Jim observed. "Are you going to let us in Tuesday night? Archie said you would."

"I am certainly going to put up the chain after you go out. I couldn't sleep if I knew the house was open with so many dreadful characters in the place," Effie declared.

"And how is Archie to get in again? Of course he can come back with me," said Jim.

"Indeed he sha'n't. Do you suppose I want to be left alone in this great house with nobody but Simmons? What if we were to be burgled? Then it would be all Archie's and my fault."

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"As to that, you may depend upon it that Simmons will be there himself," said Jim.

"No he won't. Archie says the only way is for me to sit up and let him in," Effie declared. "I wish he wouldn't go. It's horrid, anyway."

On Tuesday evening Effie dined with the Porters, returning in time to witness the departure of her brother and his mentor. Mrs. Percival had retired early, and the solitary maid who had waited to see the young lady safely at home proceeded to bolt and bar the doors for the night. Effie watched her, feeling like a conspirator, declined her assistance in undressing, and stole down-stairs again after a misleading good night at her own door. In the dark hall she awaited the signal which Jim had invented, and when the strains of the Garden of Sleep were whistled at the gate she drew the bolts and stood on the steps while Archie, who had been asleep on the library sofa, crept about collecting materials for the cocktail with which he saw fit to inaugurate the clandestine expedition. Young Trevor, mistrusting his friend's abilities in that line, came into the house to assist, and there was much giggling and stumbling over furniture, and rattling of shakers before the pair finally

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took their departure. Jim lingered to part impressively with Effie, who was flitting about with a candle in her hand, and his farewell rang out incautiously through the silent house. The door slammed, too, despite her precautions, and as she passed the first bend in the staircase she heard footsteps descending to meet her. The next moment her light shone full into Percival's face.

When a person is supposed to be at a distance it is a trifle disconcerting to have him suddenly appear, even if he come opportunely, and in this instance what wonder that Miss Fenwick, who had pictured him safe in town for at least three days longer, was horribly abashed to be found by him thus? He was still in morning dress, and he held a paper in his hand. Effie fancied that his face was flushed. For a moment they stood glowering at each other. He was the first to break the silence. "Was that Jim Trevor who just went out? I thought I recognized his voice."

Effie looked him straight in the face and set her lips.

"Might I remind you that it is a little unusual for a young girl to receive visitors at this hour?" he said, seeing that she made no re-

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sponse beyond the guilt and anger in her face. "I'm sorry to appear officious, but I'm afraid I must."

"You don't mind interfering," Effie broke in.

"I thought at first that he was here with Archie," said Percival in the hopeless tone which it must be confessed he was apt sooner or later to employ in his conversations with his young charge. "Of course, if I had known it was you, I should have come all the sooner. I wanted to see him in any case."

"It seems you don't like to have him come here," she remarked, incautiously. "Clip would be complimented, I'm sure."

"He knows better than to call at this hour," said Percival. "Of course, if he only came to see Archie——"

"I sha'n't tell you anything," said Effie, angrily. "Think what you please."

"I wish I could make you realize that I am not offending you for my own amusement," said Percival. "I believe if you will think it over quietly you will admit that you have been a little imprudent."

"*You* sha'n't tell me what is proper!" she cried. He had placed his hand on the balus-

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trade, and it seemed to her that he was purposely barring her passage. "I hate you, anyway!" she exclaimed, and rushed past him so that her candle went out in a flare of smoke and left them in hostile darkness.

Percival, thus flouted, lit the gas, picked up the latest number of the Gossip which his tempestuous charge had knocked out of his hand, and reread a paragraph marked with blue pencil in which his own name and Mrs. Trevor's were linked with such an ingenuity of innocence that unless one were willing to admit the perfect fit of the cap, one could not openly resent the author's posing it upon one's reluctant head. He could only hope that no evil chance had sent a similar copy to the Trevors. As he turned to toss the torn fragments into the waste-paper basket his eye fell upon the empty cocktail glasses and the shaker, recklessly left on the hall table. "Little fool!" he growled. "Why in Heaven's name do I take any trouble about the girl? Why don't I let her commit her bêtises as the spirit moves her? If she is in the habit of making these endearing little speeches to her acquaintance at large she will be on our hands with a vengeance." He went to the window and

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opened the blinds. Far down the driveway a lantern was bobbing, and the sound of voices was borne faintly back to him on the night wind. Suddenly an explanation of Jim's nocturnal visit flashed through his mind, and snatching a hat and stick from the rack he started in hot pursuit.

Although he was a rapid walker the pair with the lantern had an excellent start, and it was only at the door of their destination that he had the pleasure of seeing them slip inside and recognized them beyond a doubt, though they were blissfully unaware of his proximity. They, being armed with tickets, passed in unchallenged, whereas he was obliged to parley with the doorkeeper and finally as a great favor was allowed to negotiate his own admission at an exorbitant price. From the applause within he judged that the combatants had appeared in the ring, but the crowd of spectators so far exceeded the capacity of the hall that it was no longer possible to come near the ropes, and only Percival's height enabled him to distinguish various familiar heads among the throng: the exclusive Mr. Floyd, cheek by jowl with local politicians, saloon-keepers, and men from the club stables; Barry Porter scraping

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an acquaintance with Melville, and, well to the front, a brown head and a red one close together in excited colloquy. To reach them was impossible, and since they were there he was incapable of the cruelty of curtailing their enjoyment. They had been seen, just as he had been seen himself, countenancing a variety of exhibition which the better part of Fortmount-house was anxious to suppress, and in the estimation of their reluctant mentor they might as well be hung for an old sheep as a lamb. The atmosphere was stifling, and Percival, who was bored as well as irritated, and moreover could see little or nothing of the fight, waited as near the door as possible for the end. Fortunately for his patience the big Crowley soon showed himself to be the better man of the two, and the finish was not long delayed. Then the crowd began to move toward the door, and those minor combats for which Salter's enjoyed an unsavory reputation developed with an alarming promptness. Arguments waxed fierce and blocked the passages, and heated debaters were dragged apart by their friends or urged to unpolemic settlement of their differences of opinion. Foley of the training stables fell foul of Archie and bade

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fair to draw him into an altercation, as Mr. Fenwick was a youth who brooked no contradiction. Mr. Floyd appeared to be having a finger in the pie, while Jim strove to pour oil upon the troubled waters and get away. It was at this juncture that Percival found it advisable to intervene and to despatch the belligerent Foley to a neighboring bar while he and Mr. Floyd each escorted a youth into the better air outside. Up to this point no words had been wasted between the four, but now Bobby, who had come with the Melville party, slipped away and left the culprits face to face with their Nemesis.

“Well, Sid, I see you couldn’t resist after all,” young Trevor observed, genially.

“Come along, Child,” said Percival. “I see you walked.”

Archie, unable to imitate his fellow sinner’s airy grace, was conscious that Percival’s appearance was more in an official than a private capacity, and walked along sullenly.

“I’ve seen better fights than Moore put up,” Jim next observed. “He had a chance to smash Crowley in the third round, and he let him have it with the left instead. Now if I had been in his place——”

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"I tell you, he didn't have the chance," Archie broke in. "Crowley never gave him a show from the first. Foley was undertaking to say that he was overtrained, but I tell you it was pure brains on Crowley's part to force his left all the time."

"He could have smashed him, couldn't he, Sid?" Jim demanded.

"The only part of the performance I witnessed was that in which Foley was very much disposed to smash you both," said Percival, blandly, "which would have been quite as entertaining to the community at large as the other fight."

"That would have been nasty," Jim admitted. "Roy would have been fit to be tied. It's lucky you thought better of it and came. At least I can say we were in good company."

"I tell you, Child, you are corrupting me," said Percival, pensively. "I haven't been inside that filthy hole since I was your age, and now, for the pleasure of your society, I have endured two hours of extreme discomfort, and posed as a supporter of the Fancy. You are leading me astray, you young villain, and I shall have to shun you in future."

"Don't! I'm such a good excuse!" said Jim.

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"I fear I no longer yearn for one," said Percival. "When you have been that kind of an idiot as many years as I have, you will know how it feels and wish you had left yourself a few illusions about one thing and another."

"I love you when you preach," said Jim, tenderly.

"That is another disadvantage. I have no right to preach to you," Percival agreed. "The *et tu quoque* style of argument would prove too convincing for me. So I won't indulge in those moral reflections which rise to my lips."

"You are more considerate than Roy will be, when you tell him," Jim observed. "He says I am bound for the devil whatever I do. It comes so well from him, you know."

"Trevor is a settled married man," Archie now observed for the first time, "and he has had his fling."

"He is very lucky, then," said Percival. "There is everything in being able to pull up when you have had enough. Otherwise, think of the trouble of it! Sitting up when you would prefer to be in bed—drinking when you don't want to—racking your brains to concoct something devilish and sensational, all for the edification of a pack of old tabbies whose imagina-

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tions will distance your wildest exertions. No, it doesn't pay, and were it not for the idea that if you have the name you might as well have the game, it would be far simpler and more congenial to take to a milk diet, and have your sins committed for you by proxy."

"Dear old boy," said Jim, insinuatingly, "you'll make it all right with Roy, won't you?"

"Dear old Child," Percival responded, caressingly, "if I ever catch you at The Cedars again out of respectable calling hours, I will make it particularly pleasant for you."

"Well, you know why I went," said Jim.

"I learn it with pleasure," his friend affirmed. "By the way, Archie, why didn't you say that you wanted a latch-key? It is better than making your sister sit up for you."

Mr. Fenwick was feeling very young and silly after his evening of independence, and envied Jim his ready tongue and his aptitude for blandishments, as well as the greater notice which Percival had accorded to his shortcomings. It seemed to him that his own defiance of authority was not receiving its meed of condemnation, and he would have preferred a raking over the coals from his guardian, for whom he cherished a sneaking admiration, to

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the apparent indifference with which that gentleman regarded his lapse from grace. "I suppose he was joking. I didn't expect he would take it that way," he confided to Jim the next day.

Young Trevor was in a chastened mood. "Joking or not," he affirmed, "if there is anybody on earth who can make me feel I wish I led a different life, it is Sidney. After that business last spring, when they were all going at me hammer and tongs, he talked to me like—well, I don't know what it was like, but anyhow, I felt then that I was going to turn over a new leaf, and I have, you know."

Archie regarded him with admiration. A youth of twenty who possessed the daredevil bravery to announce his intention of reforming challenged not only esteem but emulation.

It was luncheon time when Percival again saw Miss Fenwick. She had returned from her drive, and now sat swaying in a hammock, awaiting the summons to the dining-room. Percival, who had heard the carriage wheels, went in search of her. She wore a white dress spotted with black, and appeared lost in contemplation of her high-heeled shoes. Notwith-

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standing the manner in which she ignored his approach, he rested his hand on the hammock ropes, and spoke to her directly. "Miss Fenwick, I fear I did you an injustice last night. I was in a bad humor, and no doubt I was rude. I hope you will pardon my incivility."

Effie looked at him and set her lips. She had been nursing her wrath against him all the morning, and he seemed to her by no means properly abject.

Her defiant air diverted him. "Well," he said, with the suspicion of a smile, "must I grovel yet more, or are you going to forgive me?"

Then Miss Fenwick was guilty of an act so absolutely preposterous that a better-behaved young person will hardly credit it. She turned like a little fury, sprang from her hammock, and with her small right hand, which should have been extended in token of reconciliation, aimed a vindictive if somewhat ineffective blow at Percival's face. Then, in a tumult of fright and rage, she disappeared, leaving him rooted to the spot, lost in astonishment, utterly shocked and disgusted at this quite unparalleled piece of ill-breeding. He was even a trifle pale around the lips. Never before in

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the course of his varied career had he been so treated. He took his hat and went across the fields to Mrs. Townshend's. The same evening he departed for Bar Harbor. The atmosphere of Fortmounthouse was becoming intolerable to him.

CHAPTER XIII

A CONFLAGRATION

"DOES the woman live here?" Mr. Floyd demanded, gazing after the retreating forms of Mrs. Beverly and Trevor. "She was here in May and in August, and now she's back before the end of September."

"I can't see, though, that it's any affair of yours whom Clip chooses to invite," said Miss Fenwick, who stood in no awe of the oracle.

"It's my impression that Roy does the inviting," he insinuated, darkly. They were sitting on the Club House piazza, with a little table between them, while a short distance away Percival sat reading such papers as Mr. Floyd had not placed in the seat of his own chair for safe-keeping. Effie, who had barely exchanged two words with her guardian since his return from Bar Harbor, now turned her shoulder to him, and sipped her lemonade through a straw, while Bobby, with a Tom Collins at his elbow, regaled her with items

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from the local paper. Ordinarily she would have paid small heed to him, but the piazzas were deserted, there was nothing to watch on the tennis-courts, and no sound save the rocking of her own chair, the droning of the seven-year locusts, and Mr. Floyd's voice. Suddenly he banged his fist upon the table, and cried with righteous indignation, "More incendiarism, by Jove! Two more stables burned at Milford! What are we coming to?"

"Did they save the horses?" Percival inquired, looking up from his Turf, Field, and Farm.

"Not one," said Mr. Floyd, glancing down the page. "There's the result of your socialism for you! Oh, you may laugh as much as you please, and go on meddling with the existing state of affairs and putting ideas into those people's heads, but you see what comes of it. It's just what I've been telling Spriggy for years past. Put clothes on their backs and carpets on their floors, and they burn your stables for you. It will be your houses and your families next, and potting you by the light of the flames."

"It seems that this John McIntire had one of their meetings broken up. He owns the hall

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where it was being held," said Percival. "So they burned him out."

"Well, I suppose you will maintain that he should have let them go on with it," Mr. Floyd surmised.

"I suppose he might have taken the trouble to find out what they wanted the hall for," said Percival. "After they had commenced their exercises, it seems to me rather like waving a red rag at a bull to attempt to stop them."

"Well, now, see here," said his cousin, combatively. "You own that block of buildings on High Street, don't you? And you rent part of it to Lang, and he's got a hall there. Now would you have a Socialist meeting held there without trying to put a stop to it?"

"As long as Lang pays his rent and doesn't start a brewery on the premises, I don't know that I could stop him until his lease expired," said Percival.

"Well, laugh, then!" cried Mr. Floyd. "I tell you, it's serious. They'll turn their attention to Fortmounthouse next, and if they don't burn the roofs over our heads I shall be much surprised. I'm going to write a letter to that paper."

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“Do, and sign it ‘Constant Reader,’” said Percival.

“Very well, you’ll see who’s right about it,” the indignant gentleman predicted.

“I wish you wouldn’t talk so,” Miss Fenwick protested. “You make me very uncomfortable.”

Meanwhile Trevor and Mrs. Beverly had paused midway on their homeward journey to rest on a seat nailed between two yellowing maple-trees.

“It seems as though we had never been away,” he said, lazily. “The same old weather the same old trees, the same old river.”

“The same foolish woman who hadn’t the sense to stay away,” she added in a low voice.

“Why was it foolish? And, for that matter, why shouldn’t you be foolish if you choose?”

“Only pretty women can afford that sort of folly.”

“I wish you wouldn’t fish for compliments,” said Trevor. “I never will pay them when they are expected, you know. And I never make pretty speeches to you, nowadays. I say things because I can’t help myself.”

“To have people look at me once as they look at Clip!—even as they are going to look at

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that little goose of an Effie—as you look at her now!” sighed Mrs. Beverly.

“Yes, she is improving. But beauty isn’t the only thing,” he said, half to himself. There was a sort of regret in his tone which she felt, perhaps more than he intended. There is never a man so well contented with his lot that the past does not call to him out of some corner of his heart—the time of unrealized possibilities, the ghost of a lost future. When this siren voice lures, whatever is not, is the best, and realities in their most attractive guise pale before the vision of what might have been. Then a wife means every-day life, conscience, duty, and the other woman, whoever she may be, stands transfigured in the sunset glow of sentiment and illusion. The other woman now experienced a moment of exultation, by no means the first she had owed to Trevor—a sense of triumph over fairer rivals, who could boast of more than fascinating voices, fine shoulders, and illuminating smiles—almost a scorn for the beauty she envied.

Two days later an article actually did appear in the Bugle denouncing labor-unions, socialism, and incendiarism in the most scathing terms, and ending with a threat that Lang’s

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Hall would shortly be shorn of its privileges by the owner of the block, who, the author hinted, would stand no nonsense from unscrupulous demagogues. Mr. Floyd, when taxed with indiscretion, denied all knowledge of the article, and wagged his head with renewed misgivings over the dreadful state to which things had come.

It happened that Effie was forced to spend that evening alone, and by the time the Trevors and Mrs. Beverly returned from their bridge party her nerves were in a fit state to be further set on edge by the details of the Milford fires which they brought home. The three ladies, in fact, unwisely sat until the small hours in their dressing-gowns, exchanging tales of horror, while Trevor slumbered peacefully.

It seemed to Effie that she had hardly closed her eyes before she opened them again at the sound of voices in the hall. She crept to her door, and through a crack saw Trevor and Mr. Floyd in earnest conversation. Bobby was gesticulating. He wore no overcoat, and a hat obviously not his own still adorned his head. Trevor was buttoning his collar.

"It's perfectly awful!" Bobby was saying, "and Sid is fit to be tied. They seem to think

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it's *my* fault, though I had no more to do with it than the baby has. Now why the devil do you stop for a tie? Hurry! Hurry! They have telephoned to the Club and to the village, and I've got to get back there sometime to-night. If anything happens to the horses it will half kill him."

"Don't make such a row. I'll go as soon as I've brushed my hair," said Trevor.

"Don't brush your hair!" fairly bellowed the exasperated Mr. Floyd. "The stable will be burned to the ground before you get there. I believe I can see the glare of it this minute. For Heaven's sake stop your prinking and get a move on you."

Mrs Trevor's door opened and her head was thrust forth. "I knew there was something wrong," she announced with gloomy triumph. "Now tell me what it is."

"Those dirty beggars have set fire to Sid's stables," the bearer of ill tidings announced. "I knew they would. I tell you, Roy, I wish you would lend me a pistol of some sort, and you'd better put one in your own pocket. You may need it before this night's work is through."

"You sha'n't go a step!" said Mrs. Trevor with decision.

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“Nonsense, dolly. Bobby is joking. There’s no danger to us,” said her husband, “and even if there were, think of poor Sidney. His horses are like children to him.”

“I’m awfully sorry, especially about Harlequin,” said Mrs. Trevor, “but you sha’n’t go near the fire. And if you try to rescue anybody I’ll never forgive Bobby for it, never!” She fled into her room once more.

“Now,” said Trevor, reproachfully, “I told you how it would be if you made such an infernal row. You will have to wait a minute.” He sauntered in after her, and was gone for some time, while Bobby fussed and fumed outside. Finally he emerged, and Effie heard them clatter down-stairs. No sooner had the door slammed than she sought Mrs. Trevor’s room, and found the beauty in bed, where nothing was visible of her save her eyes and a few stray curls.

“Yes, they are gone,” said Mrs. Trevor, “and I am only thankful that Jim and Archie are not here to go too. Did you ever have a presentiment? I have one now, that something terrible is going to happen to one of my family, and who can it be but Roy? Oh, you don’t know how reckless he is when there is any danger!”

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Effie had never seen her friend so unnerved, and her words conjured up a dreadful vision of Trevor borne home on a stretcher, with his handsome face disfigured. The thought smote her like a sword.

"Well, I suppose you had better go back to bed, and try to sleep," said the beauty, with a return to her usual practicality. "Good night, dear, and don't worry. How fortunate that Spriggy took the boys to Lenox!"

Effie obeyed reluctantly. From her own windows she could see the distant glare against the starlit sky. In the night it seemed very far away. She was trembling violently, and her heart was filled with a sickening apprehension that was not wholly sympathy for Clip. With unsteady fingers she dressed herself, going often to the window to look out toward The Cedars. If she could only see or hear! It was horrible to think of him there, among falling timbers and trampling horses, with possible miscreants lurking around corners to shoot him in the glare of the conflagration. If he would only come home! She could not endure much more of this awful suspense, and the tightening of something around her heart which she did not understand. As she watched there was a

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sharp report in the distance, like a pistol-shot, and with the sound her few remnants of sense deserted her. She had but one impulse. He was in danger, and she must go to him. "He must listen to me," she repeated to herself. "He must come home." She snatched up an old gray shawl and wrapped it about her shoulders, then fled fearfully down the stairs, out of the front door, and under the starlight down the road to The Cedars.

She could not have explained what benefit her presence could be to him. She had not paused to reason: indeed she was in her normal nervous condition—more given to emotions than logic. She was conscious only of an overmastering desire to behold him with her own eyes, to be assured of his safety in her own person, and to induce him to return with her. The loneliness of the road filled her with terror, yet she hastened on until she arrived, panting and breathless, at Percival's gate, and saw the long low house standing forth silhouette-like against the glow of the conflagration. She ran on toward the stables. No fire-engines had yet arrived, but the neighbors had turned out in full force, although there seemed little for any one to do save to watch the doomed build-

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ing. Here were men with whom she had talked and danced under proper chaperonage and at seasonable hours. They could hardly be expected to recognize her as she stood shivering in the shadow of the house at midnight, wrapped in her gray shawl. For the first time she wondered that she had dared to come. She heard Bobby's loud voice rising among shouts and chaotic directions. Farther away others were trying to save the carriage house. Trevor was nowhere visible, unless he might be among those black figures by the stable door, trying to lead away the frightened horses, that reared and sank back on their haunches in terror of the flames. Then suddenly Bobby sprang forward crying, "You fool, don't go in there! Damn it, what are you doing?"

"It's the other horse!" said some one.

"Stop him, why don't you? Don't let him go!" cried Bobby, fiercely.

Effie's heart stopped beating. There was a short silence, broken by the crashing of a beam. She caught at the vines to steady herself. Why had she not seen him sooner? If she could only have spoken to him!—and now perhaps it was too late. An awful light was breaking upon her poor little mind. This stifling agony was

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not simply for her friend's husband. It was for the man whom she was foolish and wicked enough to love.

The moments seemed to lengthen into hours. All the movement around her impressed her only as a horrible panorama in a dream. Finally she discerned through the smoke the figures of a man and a horse making their way out of the fierce heat on to the charred grass. At once they were surrounded by other figures, and the horse was led away. Now he was coming toward her, the others following, and she stepped out into the bright light, her shawl slipping away from her head and shoulders, and stood in the path awaiting him. She had forgotten everything else. He passed quickly from the glare into the shadow, and out again into the starlight, and she flung her arms about his neck with a convulsive sob, crying, "Oh, you're not killed?" The absurdity of the question, the impetuosity of the act mattered nothing to her, nor did she hear the exclamation of one of the men as the light fell on her face: "By Jove, it's little Miss Fenwick!" But in a moment she realized her mistake. It was not Trevor, but Percival.

He drew her quickly back into the shadow.

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It would have been difficult to say which was the more horrified, but his horror was mingled with indignation, and hers with the shame of a sudden awakening. "Where is Roy?" she asked with the sharpness of distress. "I didn't know it was *you*."

"What are you doing here?" Percival inquired.

"Oh, never mind that. Is he hurt?" she entreated.

"Of course not. How did you come?"

"I couldn't stay in the house when I knew he was in danger. How could I know that it was you?" she demanded again, fiercely. It seemed to her that all her trouble arose from some fault of his.

"Mrs. Trevor didn't come?"

"I tell you, I came alone."

"And even my mother has gone to the Club. Still, you can't go back now." He was opening the side door as he spoke, and stood aside for her to pass through.

"No, I won't go in," she protested.

"It is perfectly safe. The engines ought to be here now, and as soon as I can leave I will take you home."

"No, I won't. I'll go with Mr. Trevor."

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“Don’t you see yourself that this is no place for you?”

She did not stir. Percival on this occasion wasted no further time on his usual trick of looking hopeless, but without more ado lifted his young charge over the threshold, and closed the door after him. “I hope you can make yourself comfortable,” he observed, dryly. “I am going to telephone to the Club, and after that I must leave you again, but I must beg you to stay here until I am at liberty to take you back.”

Miss Fenwick, realizing the futility of argument, seated herself in a revolving chair at Percival’s desk while he talked over the wire to his mother, who had departed under charge of the butler, fully an hour ago, with her diamonds in a bag. Some of the servants were on the roof keeping the walls wet, while the maids hung out of the windows with their aprons over their heads and watched the struggles of the amateur firemen. One of them finally appeared in answer to Percival’s summons, and brought him a decanter of whisky, and while he poured out a glass and drank it she exclaimed over his burnt hands and the condition of his clothes. “I hav’n’t time to bother about it now,” he said.

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“Just take this out to Mr. Floyd and send one of the men out with some soda and ice or whatever they want.” Effie thought him decidedly cross and unpleasant, but his voice was mild enough when he assured his mother that everything was going on nicely, and that all the horses were safe. As he was leaving the room he recommended his young charge to remain on the ground floor, and to go to sleep if possible. She did not respond, but sat with her face buried in her hands, humiliated and frightened. Every noise that sounded without, every falling timber and cracking post, added to her alarm, and streaks of red flame shot up from the windows, so near that the house itself seemed in danger. Then came the fire-engine, its bells clanging harshly, and the hissing of water was presently added to the din. From the window she could see Trevor, calmly surveying the scene with his hands in his pockets. Now that the engines had arrived there seemed little for him to do, and he was meditating a speedy trip homeward. A groom came by, leading one of the horses. Trevor stopped him to examine it, and Effie, listening, heard him say, “Tell Mr. Percival that I have gone home. I fancy everything is safe now, but if he needs

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me, let him call me up again." As he made his leisurely preparations for departure her brilliant idea recurred to Effie. Why not follow and overtake him, thus dispensing with the unwelcome escort which had seemed inevitable? She would beg him to say nothing of her incautious escapade, and he, being cursed with no such absurd ideas as all the others appeared to harbor, would ask no embarrassing questions and make no comments. He understood her. She cautiously opened the door, and waited until the coast was clear, then ran in the direction which he had taken.

CHAPTER XIV

THE TRIALS OF A GUARDIAN

AT an hour by far too early for callers a Club jigger drew up at the door of Fortmount-house on the following morning, and Percival alighted, looking rather the worse for wear. At the sound of wheels Mrs Trevor left the breakfast table to meet him, and carried him off to a secluded corner of the piazza. "I have just received your note," she said. "Thank you for sending me word. I had not missed her, but of course I should have heard of it in any case. I don't understand it in the least. What does it all mean?"

"Ask Miss Fenwick," said Percival. "I can't tell you. I did not telephone, for I thought since she had come back there was no necessity of informing the neighborhood that you had not known of her going."

Mrs. Trevor looked at him in consternation. "But she hasn't come back," she said.

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“Are you sure? Why, she must have come with Roy. Isn't she in her room, or somewhere about the house?”

Mrs. Trevor shook her head. “Wait a moment. I will see for myself,” she said, and ran up-stairs. Presently she returned, with a sober face. “I have looked everywhere. She certainly is not here. She must be with your mother.”

“Mother is at the Club, and has not seen her at all,” said Percival.

“Sidney, you can't mean that you don't know where she is?” The color had died out of Mrs. Trevor's face, and she spoke with the sharpness of anxiety.

“Don't worry, Clip. She is bound to turn up,” he said, consolingly. “Perhaps she is with those friends of hers at Graystone.”

“Possibly. I hate to inquire, though,” said Mrs. Trevor. “I am so sorry about your stables. Do you suppose that silly article in the paper had anything to do with it? Roy seems to think so.” Her tone was a little perfunctory, her thoughts being plainly with her errant charge.

“Fortunately nobody was hurt, and no great harm done. It's a beastly nuisance,

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though. I shall have to stable at the Club for the rest of the summer," said Percival.

"I'm so glad that you saved the horses," she said: "You must tell me all about it."

"When I have found Miss Fenwick," said Percival, and ran down the steps. Mrs. Trevor, outwardly serene, resumed her seat at the breakfast table.

After fruitlessly visiting the Porters', the Club, and The Cedars, where he found his mother unloading various little chamois bags which she had secreted in divers portions of her attire, Percival set forth on foot for Mr. Fenwick's house, which he had placed in charge of a caretaker. No sooner had he started across the fields, however, than he met Mr. Floyd, coming in haste from Mrs. Townshend's, where he was staying to console the deserted Percy. "Well, upon my word," cried the lively gentleman, "I knew you were a gay deceiver, but I had no idea you had brought your charms to bear on that quarter."

"I don't know what you mean," Percival untruthfully replied.

"Come, now, Walter Smith saw you, and Morgan, and one or two other fellows. I had no idea you were making any running there."

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The luckless Percival experienced a thrill of horror. Deplorable as Effie's escapade had seemed to him on the previous night, this aspect of it was far more appalling. He knew that she had been recognized in the act of greeting him with a degree of feeling which the circumstances hardly warranted, but other matters of more present import had relegated this consciousness to a secondary place. The fact that these demonstrations had not been intended for him was hardly one to be made public, even if publicity would have mitigated the indiscretion of her conduct. Certainly the girl, for some mysterious reason, had openly compromised herself, and no explanation could satisfactorily clear her save one. He did his best to silence Mr. Floyd, whom he presently managed to shake off. There was no telling how soon this marplot would ferret out the fact of Effie's disappearance, and add it to his tale of wonder. So he came to the house, standing with closed doors and drawn blinds in the gray fog of the morning, and rang the bell, wishing devoutly that it and all its inmates had vanished from the face of the earth before ever he had been burdened with them. He thought he knew what he ought to do, and he proposed to

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do it, but the pill was a bitter one, and he surveyed it, not with hesitation, indeed, but with a wry face. The door was opened by the caretaker. "Is Miss Fenwick here?" he asked, abruptly.

"Yes, sir. She is in the parlor," said the woman.

Effie's voice responded to his rap. She was lying on the sofa, covered with her shawl, but she sat up when she saw him, and surveyed him defiantly. Then, "I thought it might be Clip," she said in tones replete with disappointment.

Percival stood looking down at her. Her hair was disordered and there were blue circles around her eyes. Her pretty dress was draggled and muddy, and she showed unmistakable traces of her recent fright and exposure, but the color flamed into her cheeks beneath his steady gaze. "Mrs. Trevor does not know where you are," he said finally.

"I suppose of course you will scold," said Effie. "I saw Roy start for home, and I thought I would go back with him, but before I could catch up with him he turned into a road I didn't know, and I lost him. And I went everywhere, but I couldn't find my way home. And it was so cold and dreadful, my teeth were just chat-

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tering. Finally I struck a path I knew, so I came here. And I know I've taken pneumonia or something, I feel so queer. So you needn't be hateful to me. Grandpa never was."

He drew a chair up to the sofa on which she still reclined, and seated himself opposite her with an air of determination. The memory of their last meeting made her flush again, but she regarded him aggressively. "Do you realize what an imprudent thing you have done?" he asked, gravely.

"Well, if you ached all over the way I do, you wouldn't ask me such a silly question," said Effie with a note of self-pity in her indignation.

"No doubt you have taken cold, but that is not the worst result of this business, I am afraid," said Percival. "I left Mrs. Trevor in the greatest anxiety over you, and my mother as well. Why couldn't you have remained where you belonged in the first place? And since you didn't, why wouldn't you stay where I left you, instead of taking this wild-goose chase over the country?"

"I didn't want to stay. I told you I was going back with Roy," said Effie. "Did he get home safely?"

"Of course," said Percival, impatiently.

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“Does he know about it?”

“I think not. I am sure I hope not.”

Effie began to cry. “I suppose everybody is angry with me,” she wailed. “I suppose they don’t want me to come back. Oh, what shall I do?”

“Don’t be so foolish. Of course you are going back. Mrs. Trevor will come for you as soon as she knows where you are,” said Percival.

“Then go right away and tell her,” Effie commanded.

“Before I go I must ask you to give me your undivided attention for a few moments,” said Percival, seeing that she was beginning to arrange her hair. “Mrs. Trevor doesn’t understand why you went to The Cedars last night. What explanation do you propose to give her of what happened then?”

She stopped short in her repairing of damages, and looked at him appealingly. “I had promised always to tell her everything!” she said in a voice of increasing distress.

“Of course she will hear, even if you don’t tell her,” her guardian assured her.

“But, oh, what can I say?”

“There is only one thing that I can sug-

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gest," said Percival. "You won't like it, but it will be better than the alternative."

"*You* needn't fuss about it. I'm sure, it comes hardest on me," she asserted.

"It is hard on every one who has the slightest responsibility where you are concerned. I suppose it will be said that Mrs. Trevor has not taken proper care of you."

"They have no right to say so. She told me to stay in my room, and so I shall say to everybody. Oh, I have behaved badly to her when I only meant to bring him back before anything happened to him. She was so worried about him, and I didn't think then that—" She broke off in confusion. Evidently she was beginning to realize her folly. "All the same," she flashed at him the next moment, "I can't see how it concerns *you*."

"Of course, if nobody had seen you, we could assume that it didn't concern me," said Percival. "But unfortunately it isn't merely a question of my holding my tongue. You see, the people here are more or less conventional, and expect certain things, especially in young girls, and I'm afraid they would draw the line on the wrong side of your little mistake last night."

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“They might think I took you for Archie,” Effie suggested.

“They won’t trouble themselves to find excuses. We must furnish those ourselves,” said Percival. “They take things as they find them and draw their own conclusions. It may be uncharitable, but it’s customary. And in any case I fear you will find yourself an object of curiosity.”

“Will they think that I would have taken that dreadful walk for *you*?”

“If you and I know better, I trust we shall have the sense to keep it to ourselves. Fortunately we can give an excuse that will pass. It will be hard on you, of course, but still, it might be more hopeless.”

“I don’t see how,” Effie persisted.

“You might have found the person you were looking for,” said Percival, feeling like a butcher, but not much regretting his brutality. Effie looked straight before her and said nothing. He nerved himself to the effort and continued, “Of course, if our engagement were announced, that would account for everything.”

She looked at him blankly. “Be engaged to *you*?” she echoed in tones the reverse of flattering.

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"It really seems the only thing to do," he said. "I know the idea isn't agreeable to you, and I can't pretend that you have ever given me any cause to think that it would be. You need not even regard the arrangement as permanent, but you must see that it is practical."

"I see that it would be ridiculous," Effie declared. "You don't care anything about me."

"I ask nothing that I can't reciprocate," he answered. "I am perfectly aware that you are not fond of me. All the same, I have undertaken to look after you, and I propose to do it."

"Not in that way. People have no business to pretend when they don't love each other," she said with conviction.

"Romance is all very well, Miss Fenwick," said Percival, "but it won't save you from being talked about. And it won't explain matters to Mrs. Trevor."

"It's for *her* you care," cried Effie, suddenly, flinging all reserve to the winds, "and not for me. Why should I be talked about any more than you? Is it any better to care for a married woman than for a married man?"

Percival turned white. If he had previously regarded the girl with scant favor, that moderate amount was dispelled by her unparal-

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leled temerity. Such an implication was not for a moment to be admitted, however much in his soul he might realize its truth, nor would he in any way reply to the charge, but he fixed upon the rash and presumptuous young person a gaze which forced her to drop her own eyes, little as she apparently realized the enormity of her directness. Far from seeing how her thrust had struck home, she felt herself suddenly guilty and ashamed. As for him, having with success refuted an accusation which no one had been bold enough to make in his presence before, however much it might be circulated out of his hearing, he reverted to his original theme, and said, "Well, I have presented the case quite frankly to you. I can't say any more. Take me or leave me, as you see fit."

"I wouldn't take you," said Effie, obstinately, "if you were the last man on earth."

Percival rose to go. "I suppose you have some other explanation, then, to give to everybody who is interested in you?" he suggested. "I am going to Mrs. Trevor now, but I shall tell her as little as possible, and if you decide after all to take my suggestion, I shall be very much relieved." She would not turn her head, but

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beat with her foot on the carpet. She had not yielded an inch, but she was beginning to regard him with a very wholesome fear. At the door he paused, with an impulse he was at a loss to account for. "I'm very sorry for you," he said, and left the room.

CHAPTER XV

WE PREPARE FOR A CAMPAIGN

THE dreaded explanation with Mrs. Trevor, which Effie felt positive she could never survive, was destined to be so long averted that subsequent events obviated its necessity. The girl was so unmistakably ill by the time the carriage arrived from Fortmounthouse that no one had the heart to do more than commiserate her, and it was Percival who after all was obliged to bear the brunt of the cross-questioning. Mr. Floyd's news had preceded him, and he was called upon for an account of the night's doings by the person from whom he had been most anxious to conceal them. However valiantly he might beat about the bush, one fact was obvious to him: Mrs. Trevor had hit with unerring instinct upon the truth. Indeed, from the swiftness with which she waived the subject, it was tolerably plain that the situation was no novelty to her. He could almost fancy her saying to herself, "*What, again?*" Her

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manner was a disappointment to him, for he had chosen to imagine her a supremely happy woman.

Trevor, in blissful unconsciousness of the havoc which his charms had wrought, was as usual not to be bothered with consequences, nor did he evince much curiosity regarding Miss Fenwick's illness. She had taken a heavy cold, to which the shame and horror of her awakening gave added violence. She had drifted insensibly into her fancy for her friend's husband, and it seemed as if her first glimpse of the unvarnished reality had dispelled the illusion, and revealed to her the dangerous nature of the ground on which she stood. She felt herself the most wicked, ungrateful, and treacherous of created beings, whose black heart those about her must be able to read and abhor, and she shrank from every one, most of all from the beauty. Her sentiments toward Percival had undergone a modification, and she was conscious of a sneaking admiration for him, against which she rebelled. He had shown himself most attentive during her illness, sending her flowers and seeming disposed to overlook her prompt refusal of his hand, but she felt that the end of the matter was not yet in

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sight. Was she indeed to be considered a social outcast at the inception of her career, and had she thrown away her unrivaled opportunities by her own folly? "I wouldn't care about that," she assured herself, passionately. "I would be willing to crawl into a hole and stay there forever if I could only prove to Clip that I'm not ungrateful and a snake in the grass." Meanwhile the date of the annual autumn ball at the Club was rapidly approaching, her dress was ordered, and she lay among her pillows miserably convinced that she ought not to go, since she had been guilty of so grave a breach of propriety.

Despite her sad state of mind she was convalescing rapidly, and when Mrs. Trevor entered her room bearing a pair of white satin slippers with huge rosettes, her heart sank at the thought of all that she ought to relinquish. "They came this morning," said the beauty. "When you sit up for your luncheon you had better let Harriet try them on, for if they don't fit there is still time to send for others."

Miss Fenwick for reply burst into a storm of tears. "I shall never wear them," she sobbed. "Send them away! Send *me* away! I'm not fit to stay with you."

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Mrs. Trevor dropped the slippers and put her arms around the penitent young person. "After all," she said, soothingly, in the intervals of the floods which ensued, "what have you done? You think you are wicked, and you have been only silly."

"And everybody knows how I have acted!" the culprit remonstrated, reveling miserably in her own turpitude.

"We are going to arrange it all somehow," her friend assured her. "Just devote yourself to getting well, and leave the rest to me. Not go? But of course you will go. If you really love me and want to please me, you will stop being unhappy at once, and make up your mind to come down to luncheon to-morrow. Yes, I do love you just the same as ever, and you need only act as though nothing had happened. Trust me and let me manage everything."

From the hour of this reconciliation Miss Fenwick's peace of mind was restored—too thoroughly restored, perhaps, for her own good. She had the utmost confidence in Clip, and indeed the beauty's efforts in her behalf had been unceasing. Curiosity was aroused concerning the coming débutante, whose reported

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engagement to Percival was not too strenuously denied. She certainly had powerful backers, and there were rumors of elaborate entertainments to be given in her honor. In fact, as Mr. Floyd had observed, after various indiscretions of his own which made the case more difficult to handle, "If anyone can weather the storm, we can do it." So these people to whom the opinion of Mrs. Grundy was important were prepared to defy her if need be, and Miss Fenwick's friends awaited her first appearance in public with anxiety and suspense.

The advisability of conciliating Percival had been so impressed upon Effie that she promised to be civil to him until after the ball, and for his reception of these overtures Mrs. Trevor kindly paved the way. They were resting on a bunker while their caddie searched for a missing ball, and Mr. Floyd, passing within hailing distance, waved his lofter and yelled, "Don't forget that you're keeping the cotillion for me!"

"I suppose that means that I am to ask Miss Fenwick," said Percival.

"How nice and clever of you to guess it!" she beamed upon him.

"I feared you would think of that. Well, I

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suppose I ought to be thankful that it's no worse."

"Now don't be cross, please, Sidney. Remember it is the poor child's first ball, and do your best to make it everything that it should be. You can be so charming when you don't make up your mind to be disagreeable."

"A little judicious flattery goes a long way," said Percival, "but I haven't yet ascertained just how far."

"As far as I want it to go," she answered. "So you are going to make yourself irresistible for at least one evening."

"You don't expect me to make love to her, I hope?" he protested in horror. "I can't do it. She would spoil your best laid plans by blacking my eye in the ballroom."

"No she won't. She has promised to be nice to you."

"She couldn't if she tried."

"But you know how necessary——"

"Oh, yes, of course there is only one thing for me to do, but why harp on it? If everybody believes it, as Bobby says, I'll do my part if you can induce her to do hers." He strode along with a face of great gloom, most inappropriate to an accepted suitor.

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On the piazza of the little golf house Trevor sat smoking. He had just returned from town, and had some gossip to impart, for which purpose he drew his friend aside. "Who do you suppose is back in town again?" he demanded. "Mrs. Belden, if you'll believe me."

"That woman is as much a landmark as St. Paul's churchyard," said Percival. "I thought she had a new husband. What has she done with him?"

"I didn't stop to inquire. I saw her first," said Trevor. "She has a perfect passion for marrying people, and I always have a haunting fear that sooner or later she'll get me."

"Who's that?" Mr. Floyd demanded, coming up behind them. "Were you talking about Gloriana the Child-Stealer? We are hardly young and tender enough for her, but as I was telling Jim, she'd marry *him* with pleasure."

"See here, Bobby, you needn't introduce him to her, you know," said Trevor.

"No, I wouldn't do such a thing," said Mr. Floyd, virtuously. "She used to play on my sympathies, and I considered her awfully abused, but she's no friend of mine nowadays. In fact, she's an out and out bad lot, and I shall have nothing further to do with her."

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But as for the Child, I believe he knows her already."

Trevor groaned. "I might have known it. She's a devil, that woman, and he is another."

"I thought I'd tell him," said Mr. Floyd, as Trevor departed, no longer diverted by his own news. "He always thinks those things are funny until they concern him, and then he can't see the joke. He won't put a stop to it, though. You'll see. If anything is to be done about it somebody ought to tell Clip. Of course, I'll keep an eye on him myself."

"Come in and have a drink," said Percival, abruptly.

CHAPTER XVI

WE REFUSE AN EXCELLENT PARTI, AND EAT TRUFFLES AT ST. VINCENT'S

MISS FENWICK stood before the chevel-glass in Mrs. Trevor's dressing-room, surveying her own image with pardonable satisfaction. The fit of her bodice, the fleecy expansion of her skirts, the altitude of her white satin heels, all filled her soul with delight. She pulled up her long gloves, spread her fan, turned and twirled before the mirror, and touched up the little red-gold curls on her forehead. Over the back of a chair was spread her new white opera-cloak. Her heart was beating high and anxiously, nevertheless she glanced with a smiling face over her plump shoulder at the trim little figure reflected in the glass, and was, to tell the truth, mightily well pleased with Miss Fenwick.

"Now if you'll only behave as well as you look, I shall be satisfied," said Trevor, strolling

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in and planting himself in front of her with perfect unconsciousness of the hideous appositeness of his remark.

As they finally climbed into the omnibus, Effie's face broke forth into an involuntary smile of happiness. They were very late, and Mrs. Townshend was awaiting them in the ball-room with a small battalion of men to present to the débutante. In a moment the group was the center of attraction. Effie felt that every eye was fixed upon her, but for some inexplicable reason all awkwardness and self-consciousness forsook her, and she rose to the occasion, sustained by the fact that Miss Brent, an acknowledged belle, had not half so large a circle around her. At all events, the young person's blood was fired with a determination to cover herself with glory or perish in the attempt, and she accepted the ovation prepared for her in a manner which prepossessed every one in her favor. She was enjoying herself hugely, as her radiant face attested, and chattered away volubly to her partners; and as it became evident that, thanks either to her own charms or to the excellent management of her friends, she had more than her share of attention, Mrs. Trevor breathed a sigh of relief, and

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Mr. Floyd was loud in his self-gratulatory remarks.

Percival found her on the stairs, with three youths from Mrs. Townshend's train, conducting herself for all the world like any other popular girl of his acquaintance. As she was not averse to publicly receiving a share of his attentions which she certainly did not covet in private, she made room for him beside her on the steps, and included him in her little confidences about nothing in particular until Wingfield returned with a missing fan, when her guardian departed.

"It's all management!" Mr. Floyd declared later to his aunt, watching Miss Fenwick's evident success. "We've done it well. Now she's the fashion. Otherwise she couldn't have weathered it at all. Clip will find that it's as well sometimes to take my advice."

Two popular people who dance the cotillion together naturally see little of each other, but during the short intervals when they found themselves together, Percival and Effie conversed with amiable insipidity, and even, to the onlooker, presented a confidential air which added weight to the rumors already current.

When Mrs. Trevor finally conveyed the re-

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luctant Effie to the dressing-room, he waited on the steps to put them into the omnibus, and succeeded in evoking a cordial handshake and a radiant smile from the débutante. Mr. Floyd was talking very loud, and the electric lights already looked pale against the reddening brown of the sky. Effie sank back against the cushions with a little sigh of happiness. The ordeal was triumphantly passed.

Mrs. Townshend came the following afternoon to talk over the ball, and Mr. Floyd came with her. "We were terribly cross at my house," she announced, "so we thought we would inflict ourselves on you. Child, don't you want to take me sailing?"

"I'm pining to," said Jim, "but the truth is, I'm expecting to be called to town."

"What, when your best-beloved cousin wants you?"

"I assure you, it breaks my heart."

"Let's all go sailing," Mr. Floyd suggested. "You are just as cross here as we were, and it will do you good."

"I'll walk down to the Club with you," said Jim.

At the boat-house they met Percival. "There's no breeze," he said, disparagingly.

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"Good heavens, isn't there anything we can do?" cried Mr. Floyd, accusingly.

"Row," Mrs. Beverly suggested.

"I only like to row by moonlight," said Mrs. Townshend.

"I like it when the water is smooth like this," Miss Fenwick announced. "Then I'm not afraid."

"I'll take you out for a little, if you'll have pity on my need of exercise," said Percival. "You look as fresh as a daisy, but I'm always floored by a dance in the country."

"That would be very nice. We will wait for you here," said Mrs. Trevor. "Don't go too far, Sidney, for I'm getting a longing for my tea."

"Won't you come?"

Mrs. Trevor laughed and shook her head. He settled Effie comfortably in the stern and instructed her in the art of steering. She launched into enthusiastic reminiscences of the previous evening, then became pensive and looked at the water. "Well, I never dared hope that it would turn out like that," she finally observed.

"You surely didn't think you were going to be a wall-flower?"

"I was awfully afraid so," she confessed,

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“especially since—oh, you know what I mean!”

“I am afraid it was partly my fault. I don’t mean that I ever thought you were destined to such a dreadful fate, but I was very much in dread of club gossips, and I suppose my apprehensions made me pessimistic.”

“You were certainly horrid about it,” she agreed, promptly.

“But do you think that it was altogether nonsense?”

“I suppose not.”

“You were a trifle horrid yourself, you know,” said Percival. “The scorn with which you received my suggestion was so crushing that I wonder I have the courage to repeat it.”

“Oh, don’t talk of it at all!”

He leaned on his oars and looked at her, with a feeling that he was trifling with his fate.

“We are better friends than we were then. Can’t I induce you to change your mind?”

“I shall never change my mind,” she declared with decision, “because I don’t love you, and you don’t love me.” There was no anger this time in her tone, but her feelings were evidently ruffled, and Percival, much relieved, made haste to soothe them.

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"Then I shall not bother you any more about it," he said. "I hope this hasn't cost me the little I had gained?"

"I would rather be friends with you, I think," said Effie.

"Thank you," said Percival. "I shall be very glad of that."

As they neared the shore once more, Mr. Floyd, who had been awaiting their return with interest, observed meaningly, "I see your game. You send 'em out on the water with instructions to spoon, then you marry 'em off and keep 'em in the family for future use."

"*Bobby!*" cried the scandalized ladies in chorus.

He walked down to the edge of the landing, and yelled to the luckless pair: "Oh, don't hurry! We won't wait for you."

Percival landed the boat. "We haven't been gone half an hour," he said, not comprehending Mr. Floyd's innuendo until the dreadful significance of the marplot's face betrayed him.

"I know that three's a crowd," Bobby proceeded. "Good Lord, Roy, you needn't walk all over me!"

"I need do worse if there is to be any living

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with you," Trevor growled, and hurried off with Mrs. Beverly. Mrs. Townshend had already drawn Effie ahead with her and was walking rapidly back to the Club House, and Bobby, having received black looks from both the remaining members of the party, strutted off with his nose in the air. Percival brought up the rear with the beauty.

"Well, I obeyed your commands," he announced, "and she won't have me at any price."

"Did you ask her *nicely*?"

"I did the best I could. I may not have been fervent," he admitted. "I felt it was rather overstraining a point, and so, evidently, did she."

"Well, at least don't look so relieved. It's positively indecent."

"I'll look wretched if you'll only tell me why you wanted me to go through with that foolishness again."

"Don't you know that there are some things one feels and can't explain?"

"If you feel that Miss Fenwick and I are suited to each other, I don't wonder that you are at a loss to explain it," he said sympathetically.

The others had preceded them to the Club,

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and were sitting in the hall, save Mr. Floyd, who was smoking on the piazza, in well-merited disgrace. When his gregariousness overcame his injured dignity, he met with a chilling reception, but he made a desperate and successful attempt to reinstate himself in favor. Planting himself in the midst of the group, he remarked in a mysterious tone: "Truffles!"

The utter irrelevancy of the observation caused smiles to play upon the lips of his judges, and Trevor so far unbent as to inquire: "Where?"

"At St. Vincent's," said Bobby.

"Eighteen miles, and a baddish road," Trevor objected.

"It isn't bad at all, and you haven't had the drag out since spring. As for Sid's it must be mildewed. I'll make up a party for you, and we'll tool over to-morrow afternoon. I'll telegraph ahead, and we'll have some of those truffled mushrooms with just a touch of garlic. You'd think it would be nasty, but by Jove, it's superb. Then we can spend the night, and come back the next day."

"They always have such wretched beds in those small country hotels!" Mrs. Beverly objected.

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“Well, ladies and gentlemen—*and* Sidney—what do you say?” Mr. Floyd inquired.

“Oh, let us go,” said Mrs. Townshend. “There is nothing else to do.” Mr. Floyd departed, triumphant, to telegraph his behests, and found Jim sending a wire at the desk.

“Hello, Child, you’re not really going to town, are you?” he demanded. “We shall want you to-morrow.

“I’ll go with you,” Jim agreed, when the plan had been laid before him, “but if I find that I want to go up, I shall take the train at St. Vincent’s. You needn’t mention it, though.”

It was therefore no surprise to the prime mover in this pleasure excursion that, when the two drags had landed their respective loads at their destination, and the party had broken up into twos and threes, young Mr. Trevor escaped from his vigilant cousin, rushed for the office, and upon the receipt of a yellow envelope which he found awaiting him, disappeared entirely. His absence was not noted until dinner-time, when his confidant, on being interrogated, owned with great importance to a suspicion of the young man’s errand. The dinner was excellent, and as lively as though the minds of two at least of the party had not been filled with

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uncomfortable forebodings, and Mr. Floyd partook so largely of his favorite dishes as to cause Mrs. Townshend an anxious moment. "Remember how it was with the St. Honoré," she cautioned him, "and don't, I implore you, have one of your attacks in this wretched little place!" He paid no heed to her warning, however, and drank a great deal of Burgundy, which never agreed with him, with the result that when the others were disporting themselves with various degrees of enjoyment in the billiard-room and on the piazza, he was obliged to seek his room, which was far from luxurious, and writhe on his hard bed for the remainder of the evening.

Trevor and Mrs. Beverly had been missing for some time, and Effie was walking up and down the piazza with Tom Lawrence, her most recent affinity, when a message arrived for Mrs. Townshend and Percival that the gentleman in number thirty-seven thought he was dying, and would they please to come at once. Percival was unsympathetic enough to laugh when Mrs. Trevor, on his return, inquired for news of the invalid. "He has eaten too much, that's all, and Spriggy spoils him. He repents of his sins, and disposes of his personal property every

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time he indulges in these little gustatory indiscretions. You look tired yourself, Clip."

"I have a headache," said Mrs. Trevor.

"Come outside, and see if the air won't make you feel better," Percival suggested. They paced up and down in the darkness, a good distance behind the others, and for the most part in silence. He knew that something was amiss with her, and he suspected that it was not Jim's departure alone that had taken the color out of her face, and made her hold her head even higher than usual; but it was only of Jim that he dared to speak, consolingly, as always, and making light of her apprehensions. It was late when the missing members of the party turned up. They had been for a walk, they explained, and in taking a short cut home had lost their way. Mrs. Beverly was flushed, animated, and fairly pretty. The scattered forces reunited over a hot punch, and finally trooped up the dim stairs to their unattractive quarters.

Trevor, rummaging in his dressing-case, heaved a comfortable sigh. "Poor Nelly!" he said. "She has had a pretty hard time of it."

Mrs. Trevor for the first time appeared unresponsive.

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"That old man is a cranky old demon," he continued, after a pause; "the sort of a man who would make any woman miserable. And Nelly is the sort that needs sympathy."

"Why did she marry him, then, if she didn't love him?"

"My dear, at times you make extraordinarily simple speeches."

Mrs. Trevor surveyed the dingy carpet with disfavor. "Of all absurd fiascoes, this is the climax. I never have any faith in Bobby's brilliant ideas, but this is the worst yet. I am ashamed to be responsible for such a miserable pleasure-exertion."

"Oh, well, if the Child chooses to bolt after that woman, and Bobby will gorge himself, you're not responsible. You always worry about such things, and where's the use?"

"If you had only spoken to Jim when you first knew about it——"

"Now what good would it have done? He's your brother, not mine."

"Don't talk, please. I'm tired."

"You mean you're out of sorts."

"I certainly have a bad headache."

"I don't interfere with *you*, you know," he observed, suddenly. It was only when, some

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moments later, he discovered that she was crying, that he was visited by a pang of compunction, and slopped cologne down her neck in a propitiatory attempt to bathe her head. She accepted his overtures graciously, as she always did, and on Mrs. Beverly's departure a week later she displayed her usual affectionate regret at losing her, which was all the more to her credit, as she was not a woman who forgot easily.

CHAPTER XVII

WHICH MAY NOT IMPROVE THE READER'S OPINION OF MR. PERCIVAL

No such apprehensions now tormented the débutante as had oppressed her prior to her first ball, and on her return to town with the Trevors she plunged with enthusiasm into the gaieties of the season. She also managed to attach to her train a goodly following of youths and one old friend of Percival's who appeared seriously smitten with her youthful prettiness. Effie, however, at this period, appeared to be absolutely fancy-free, and smiled impartially upon all men who danced, with only a degree less of cordiality for those who did not. She was considerably fêted. Mrs. Townshend gave a series of dinners in her honor, Mrs. Percival a large theater-party, and Mrs. Trevor sent out cards for a cotillion in her white-and-gold ballroom. It was on this last occasion that Percival incurred the disfavor of his hostess in a most unexpected manner. He

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was dancing with Effie, who had preferred not to lead herself, but he obligingly afforded his friend Lawrence ample opportunities for a *tête-à-tête*, and disappeared into the little conservatory with Effie's friend Kate Porter, who had marked him for her own with the frankness of the modern damsel from the moment of his first introduction. When he finally reappeared in time to take his turn with his legitimate partner, Mrs. Townshend waylaid him and gave him a piece of her mind. "You ought to think about those things," she said, "and not run any risks of her taking a fancy to him."

"Why shouldn't she take a fancy to him? He's one of the best fellows going," said Percival.

"Of course it isn't his fault," his cousin's wife admitted, "but you should have remembered that his father and mother are both in the insane asylum, and when one is responsible for a young girl's future, one can't be too careful. Clip is very much worried."

"But he's all right himself," Percival protested.

"You know as well as I do that it is hereditary, even if it does sometimes skip a generation," she said, severely. "Now for pity's sake

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stay where you belong, and don't give him another chance this evening."

Mrs. Beverly was distributing favors from a bower of chrysanthemums when Mr. Floyd, resting a moment from the assiduities of leadership, slipped a piece of paper into her hand. "I think you ought to see this clipping from the Gossip," he said. "You know I warned you, months ago, but you wouldn't take my advice, and this is the result."

She thrust the slip into her corsage for safe-keeping. "I'll read it to-night," she promised, "and be properly indignant the next time I see you."

"Oh, you'll be *indignant* enough!" he prophesied as he returned to his post.

Although she ordinarily ignored his hints, something in his tone aroused her apprehensions, and she availed herself of a moment when the conservatory was unoccupied to show the clipping to Trevor. "It's some of Bobby's nonsense, I suppose," she said. "Let us see what it is, and then throw it away."

"From the Gossip, I see," said Trevor. "Sometimes I think he writes for that dirty sheet himself;" and, with their heads close together, they read: "It is reported that Mr.

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Kennan's forthcoming novel will treat of the fortunes of a well-known New York family, and the matrimonial misadventures of a lady from the seat of culture, who some years ago almost succeeded in breaking off the match between the hero of the tale and his wife. I am told that the characters are far too recognizable, and that on the publication of *The Four Seasons* a storm must inevitably burst upon Mr. Kennan's audacious head. Well-known clubmen, shining lights of the Hub, and noted beauties, are explosive material from which to fashion a story, and the daring novelist may find that truth is more dangerous than fiction, should those whose frailties he has utilized so ably be foolish enough to enhance their publicity by suing him for libel."

Trevor took the bit of paper from her and read it again. "What infernal rot!" he said, angrily. "You mustn't think that it means anything."

"Bobby evidently thinks so," said Mrs. Beverly. Curiously enough, she appeared less disturbed than he did.

"Bobby has a nose for a scandal. Why should people talk? They don't talk."

"Would you care so much if they did?"

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"Shouldn't you?"

"I must make up my mind not to care," said Mrs. Beverly, "for the fact is, I'm not going back to Boston. I have taken a little house in Newport, and I expect to be there all winter."

"When you say Boston, you surely don't mean——"

"Mr. Beverly? Yes, indeed, I do. His family and mine will raise a hue and cry, and tell me I'm going to perdition. However, I would rather have mud thrown at me than live as I am living."

"Well, I don't blame you," said Trevor. "Still, for the sake of appearances, I wish you would promise me to do nothing rash. I hate to have you talked about."

"I have received two anonymous letters already."

"The devil you have! Will you let me see them?"

"Of course I won't. Why should you be bothered with them? They are probably only the beginning of my troubles."

"I'll have them stopped."

"Don't be foolish, Roy. I don't want you to worry about them. Besides, I am going away."

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I have stayed here too long. Sometimes I think that Clip is tired of me."

"Of course she isn't. She's awfully sorry for you. She *would* be down on you, though, I'm afraid, if you got a divorce."

"When she has seen what he is?"

"I don't like them myself," said Trevor.

"Mrs. Beverly clasped her hands tragically. "Then you'll desert me too!" she said.

"You know why I won't," said Trevor.

Partly through perversity, and partly because only a strenuous effort could have balked her determination, Percival had allowed Miss Porter to bear him off in triumph a second time to the conservatory which Trevor and Mrs. Beverly had just left, and here he was discovered by his hostess. When the swish of skirts was heard outside he had relinquished the girl's hand with a little pressure, while she exclaimed over the lateness of the hour. "I'm sorry, Miss Porter, but your mother has come for you," said Mrs. Trevor, pushing back the hangings with one white arm. She was not a tall woman, but there was that in her bearing which enabled her to dispense with inches. Now, as she stood in the door, Kate felt the waves of an impersonal scorn overwhelm her, and her protests of

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gratitude for a "perfectly heavenly time" were fraught with fear lest through her own incautiousness she had forfeited an opportunity of repeating the pleasure.

Percival, who, to his shame, did not share the embarrassment of his fellow culprit, followed the beauty, who greeted him with a little scornful flicker of the eyelids. "Well, Clip?" he said, meekly.

"I'm extremely sorry for that girl," said Mrs. Trevor.

"That girl," said Percival with conviction, "can take care of herself."

The ballroom had thinned out during his absence, and his abandoned partner was indulging with apparent enjoyment in a supplementary dance. He knew that he had been rude, but he also knew that she had not noticed his absence, and he reproached her for her neglect as he said good night to her. It was never so easy to make peace with Mrs. Trevor, who hardly spoke to him, and gave him her hand in a perfunctory manner. It was plain enough to him that her pique was purely on Effie's account, but he lingered a little, talking to Mrs. Beverly, in the vain hope that Clip might relent and be herself once more. His eyes

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wandered in spite of himself, until he felt that he was being subjected to a keen scrutiny, and left the house with a growing depression. In truth, Mrs. Beverly had seen his face more than once when she read there, not a mere habitual devotion to a fashionable woman, but a real passion, such as her own for Trevor, and the discovery somehow gave her a feeling of triumph and security.

CHAPTER XVIII

FOR THEIR OWN GOOD

“MAYBE you hanker after the job of talking quite plainly to Roy,” said Mr. Floyd. “Now I don’t. I’ve done it before, and it generally ended in his talking quite plainly to me. I’m no coward, as you know, and I never shrink from my duty when it’s merely a question of speaking the truth, but when a person simply won’t pay any attention to you, where’s the use of wasting your breath? And of course, if he won’t heed what *I* say, it isn’t likely he’ll listen to you. No; we’ve got to *do* something!”

His two satellites regarded him dubiously. “I don’t see what you can do,” Archie objected, “and as for sitting calmly by and seeing that angel imposed upon, when everybody is talking about it, no man with any sense of decency could do it.”

“And he’s so damned particular about other people!” growled Jim.

“And the gossip! The scandal!” cried Mr.

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Floyd with uplifted hands. "Of course, people don't talk to you as frankly as they do to me, but I assure you it is something awful. Especially after the night of Clip's dance, when they were lost *for hours!* As though it weren't bad enough to hide themselves in the conservatory all one figure, they must needs go sit on the stairs when everybody was leaving, and make a spectacle of themselves for gods and men. I know it's done every day, but to visit a woman and carry off her husband under her own roof is a crying shame, and I can't see why on earth Clip doesn't put her foot down."

"She won't hear a word against either of them," said Jim. "I have warned her twice, but she's pig-headed."

"You can't expect a lovely trusting nature like that to realize such baseness," Archie expostulated. "I hope she may never know."

"Well, she will know, and that pretty soon," Mr. Floyd declared, vindictively, "for I won't stand such rotten proceedings in our set. And when she *does* know, you'll see that she's not Madam Trevor's granddaughter for nothing."

"I wish Percival would do something," said Archie.

"For pity's sake don't mention such a thing

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to him," Mr. Floyd protested, who would have been loath to reveal his plans to his cousin. "We must do this ourselves, whatever it is, and be prepared for the rankest kind of ingratitude. People never will realize that you do things all for their own good."

Mrs. Townshend's voice rose above the chatter of her day at home. "I don't care what you wear, so long as you are neither peasants nor flower-girls."

"I have a mind to be both, out of revenge," said Trevor. "Spriggy, why *will* you do it?"

"I suppose she knows of some deserving costumer who needs to be helped along. Depend upon it, she will send his address with every card," Mrs. Beverly suggested. "Mr. Percival, you are artistic. Won't you think up a costume for me?"

"I'm thinking up my own. May I wear my old red tights?"

"You shall not be Mephistopheles again. I want you to be something historical. We are all going to be historical," said Mrs. Townshend.

"No suggestions, I beg. If I must make an ass of myself, let me do it in my own way," Percival entreated.

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"If you feel like that, you needn't go," said Effie, severely.

"Then I shouldn't see the rest of you," said Percival.

"I thought perhaps your nose would tempt you to don the virile toga," said Mrs. Beverly.

"My nose is not Roman," he replied, reproachfully. "It's distinctly Percival, and indistinctly Townshend."

"I'm going to look in at the Club for a moment before dinner," said Trevor. "Are you coming, Sid?"

"Infernal nuisance, Spriggy and her balls!" he grumbled as they started up Fifth Avenue together. "I'm sick of this everlasting gadding. Jove! Think of the duck-shooting going to waste! I believe I'll make a bolt of it, down to Jekyll Island, or some place where a man can have some peace. You had better come too. You don't look very fit yourself."

"One of us ought to be here when those Fortmounthouse lots are sold," said Percival. "If they don't bring what they should, I shall bid them in and hold them."

"Oh, the Fenwicks, the Fenwicks!" groaned Trevor. "Are you *never* going shooting with me again?"

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"Go ahead, and I'll join you when I can," his friend urged, well pleased at the prospect.

"By that time something else will turn up. I know how it will be," Trevor announced, gloomily. "Our good days together are over."

As a matter of fact, he was becoming alarmed at the position in which his incautious behavior had placed him. Mrs. Beverly's hint of a divorce had filled him with forebodings. "Why need she get one?" he reflected, uncomfortably. "*Our* women never do those things." And he had urged her to regard his house as her headquarters in town, as a second home! He was disconcerted by the callous manner in which she had accepted newspaper comment, and besides, she expected certain things of him, an attitude which always put him on the defensive. One of these things, it appeared, was to escort her the following Sunday afternoon to a certain low church, of whose revolutionary rector he strenuously disapproved, to listen to the discourse of a Hindu Suâwmi in a rose-colored turban. The address was preceded by the usual service, and Trevor conducted his devotions with unwonted fervor, and leaned back in the pew afterward, trying to remember what he had said to her on various occasions,

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and wondering what had induced him to lose his head, and make a fool of himself. Of course, he *had* urged her to return to New York, and now everybody was talking about it. And the worst of it was that she loved him!

“Don’t you think there was a great deal in what he said?” she asked as they left the church.

“I didn’t listen to the beggar,” said Trevor, truthfully. “I was thinking what guns I would take South with me.”

Mrs. Beverly received this intelligence very nicely, since there seemed to be a question of no other woman. She planned a flying trip to Newport in his absence, and on the whole showed herself very philosophical, for which he was duly grateful.

After his departure she appeared in an amiable and obliging light, and even took some pains about her costume for Mrs. Townshend’s ball. She did not hear from Trevor, who, indeed, was the worst of correspondents, and assuaged the anxiety of his family only by occasional telegrams. The unsatisfactory nature of these communications had always been a source of secret grief to the beauty, especially when contrasted with the voluminous epistles

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with which Percy Townshend favored his wife during his brief absences. Roy's absences were generally anything but brief, and it was consequently a surprise to the family when he walked in unexpectedly, late one night, with a dress-suit case full of birds and a French bulldog for Effie.

Mrs. Trevor was seated before an open fire in her own room when he arrived. She wore a pink dressing-gown, and her hair was braided for the night. "How is this?" he asked as he kissed her. "Aren't you well?"

"I was tired, and Walküre is so long, I didn't stay," she explained. "Don't you want some supper?"

He seated himself before the fire, and drew her down on his knee. "You don't seem particularly glad to see me," he said.

"Oh, I am! I have missed you dreadfully. I always feel homesick when you are away."

"I was homesick myself," he announced.

"I was afraid you wouldn't be at home for Christmas," she said.

"You needn't have worried about that. Don't you always get your own way?"

"Indeed I don't."

"You and Spriggy, both of you, always do

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exactly as you please. You manage and fuss around until you get what you want, by hook or by crook," said Trevor, "and if you aren't satisfied it's your own fault."

"Then you *didn't* want to come home?"

"I don't see what you've got in your head now," said Trevor, medaciously. "I'm sure I never stayed away so short a time before."

It is possible that Mrs. Trevor was bitterly aware of this. At all events, she swallowed a rising sob, and elaborately retied the ribbons at her waist. "Perhaps it was because I've given up writing to you to come back soon," she suggested.

"Well, of course, a man likes to feel that he is doing as he pleases," he admitted.

"Do you think I interfere with you—*now*?" she asked.

"Why, no. You're not as much *maîtresse-femme* as Spriggy," he said, kindly.

She suddenly buried her face on his shoulder. "Sometimes I'm afraid I haven't made you very happy, Roy," she said in a very small voice.

"Oh, nonsense! Of course you have. We've been as happy as possible," said Trevor, hastily. "What ails you to-night, Dolly?"

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“If there is anything I can do—or give up—to make you more contented——” she faltered.

“My dear child, I *am* contented. Am I finding any fault with you? Haven’t I trusted you implicitly for five years? What *should* you give up? There’s no reason why we shouldn’t go on being just as comfortable as ever, except those everlasting Fenwicks. Come, let’s talk sense. How is the boy?”

The Christmas festivities proved sufficiently enlivening to Miss Fenwick, who, with her new dog under her arm, repaired to Tiffany’s to assist Mrs. Trevor in the selection of a new string of pearls. One of Trevor’s shortcomings in Mrs. Townshend’s eyes was his manner of giving presents to his wife. “He writes her a check for Christmas,” she confided to Percival, “and she would rather have a bunch of violets if he would take the trouble to choose it himself. Now poor dear Percy fusses about until he finds out what I want, and gets it for me, and I am very much surprised.” Mrs. Trevor, however, displayed no dissatisfaction with her gift, and the two friends hung over the coveted strands until a sharp yelp from the little dog caused Effie to turn and behold Mr. Floyd, who had pulled the tapering black

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tail which protruded temptingly below her muff.

"Bobby, you cruel wretch!" she cried, indignantly.

"Another good girl gone wrong!" sighed Mr. Floyd. "Who would ever have expected to see *you* toting a dog? What are you buying, girls? Anything nice for me?"

"No, you have had your presents from us already," said Miss Fenwick. "You surely don't expect anything more."

"You might give me a New Year's gift," Mr. Floyd suggested, "or, if you prefer, I've got a birthday coming. Where did you get your bangle?"

"Mr. Percival gave it to me."

"He gave me something insulting," said Mr. Floyd. "A China monkey, on a green cord. It is true, it was full of candy, but still, my feelings were hurt."

"He gave you a scarf-pin too, for I helped him choose it myself," said Effie.

"Oh, you and Sidney are getting terribly chummy. I don't know about his giving you bangles, though. Clip, do you think that's proper?"

"The privileges of a guardian count for

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something," said Mrs. Trevor. "There he is, by the way."

"*I am* so tired of eternally meeting the same people!" cried Mr. Floyd. "When is Mrs. Beverly going back to Newport? How is she going to establish a residence there if she spends all her time in New York? And how the deuce is she going to get her divorce if she doesn't establish a residence? Though if *I* were the judge, she'd have only to produce that old curmudgeon to win her case."

Mrs. Trevor pretended to be absorbed in her pearls, but Effie shook her head at the indiscreet gentleman, and Percival, who now came up, proposed that they should all accompany him to Washington Square to see a family of Angora kittens which his mother was raising.

Mr. Floyd welcomed the suggestion with acclamations, and as Effie seemed favorably disposed, Mrs. Trevor, having concluded her purchase, consented to the expedition, and they set out. "I suppose Silhouette must learn to get along with cats sooner or later," Effie sagely remarked, as they walked down the avenue.

Mrs. Percival was already exhibiting her feline family to an admiring circle in the China-room, where the late Mr. Townshend's famous

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collection of miniatures looked down from the walls between cabinets overflowing with rare porcelains and enamels. The kittens, unawed by their novel surroundings, whisked their feathery tails among the Sèvres and Wedgwood, and scrambled up the legs of the Louis XV *escritoire*, while Silhouette barked shrilly from Effie's arms, and their mother growled and arched her back from the tiled fireplace.

Mrs. Trevor flitted from cabinet to cabinet, examining the markings of Percival's pet bits with a practised eye, but Effie, after picking out various familiar faces among the miniatures, listened to the voice of Mr. Floyd, and expressed a desire to go up-stairs to the studio.

"There is really nothing to see. It isn't in the least like Wingfield's—just a bare room where I paint twice a year," said Percival, disparagingly, and now appeared the reason for Mr. Floyd's eagerness.

"Aren't you going to show us your new French posters?" he asked. "I hear they're corkers."

"Why do you paint only twice a year?" Miss Fenwick asked as they mounted the stairs.

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“Because Mrs. Townshend says I mustn’t,” he answered with specious meekness.

“Not really?”

“It’s that absurd socialism of hers,” Mr. Floyd explained. “She says there’s too much competition already, and he doesn’t need the money, and his pictures always had a certain vogue, you know, so she maintains that he has no right to sell ’em. Rot, *I* call it. Not that I can see why anybody should work who isn’t obliged to.”

“Do you always do what she wants you to?” Effie demanded.

“I do when my better judgment prevails,” said Percival.

“But haven’t you anything of your own at all?” she asked, disappointed at the severity of the large room, with its skylight, its bare floor, and its walls, well covered with other people’s signed canvases.

“The models I want won’t sit for me. I commenced this last summer, at Fortmount-house,” said Percival, placing a head of Mrs. Townshend on an easel for their benefit, “but she has never been able to spare me time enough to finish it.”

Mrs. Trevor grew enthusiastic over the por-

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trait, and lamented afresh that he should bury his talents. Miss Fenwick privately thought the likeness too flattering, but forebore to speak her mind, and rummaged among the canvases with their faces turned toward the wall. Mr. Floyd was deep among the posters, and finally appeared chuckling over a particularly flamboyant one, which he secured with thumb-tacks to a drawing-board. "Look at this!" he urged. "That's what I call a perfect lady, drunk or sober."

The lady in question had apparently seated herself on a sofa for the purpose of dislodging its former female occupant, and was turning a brazen countenance upon the man who remained. Her whole figure breathed such vulgar triumph and malign determination that one divined her intention to remain even without the aid of the legend: "*La Femme qui Reste.*"

"Nasty common thing!" said Miss Fenwick, vindictively.

"She is funny, but what a vulgar wretch!" said Mrs. Trevor. "She reminds me of somebody, all the same."

"Awfully clever drawing there is in that figure!" said Percival. "Can't you feel that she's there to stay?"

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"Now I know who she looks like!" cried Mr. Floyd in triumph. "It's Mrs. Beverly."

"Nonsense, Bobby! A coarse-looking creature like that?"

"You can't deny that you see it yourself. It only needs a touch to make it perfect. Here, give me that brush, Sid," Mr. Floyd commanded. He was proceeding to lengthen the eyebrows with great smudges when Percival, unable to endure such slopping, drove him away from the easel, and with a few lines of brown and red altered the poster woman into a caricatured, but admirable, likeness of Mrs. Beverly. "There, if you *must* spoil my poster!" he said, standing aside.

Mr. Floyd shrieked with rapture, but Mrs. Trevor froze at once, and speedily swept her charge down-stairs, protesting that they had made too long a stay already.

"I'll burn it," Percival offered, as he put her into her carriage.

"That couldn't make me forget that you have done a very cruel thing," she said, and he returned to the house with the sad conviction that his indiscretion had plunged him still deeper in her disfavor.

"I no longer wonder that Bobby is stout,"

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Mrs. Percival observed at luncheon. "He called a cab to take him five blocks. But perhaps it was because he had a parcel. He sent Theresa for wrapping-paper and twine, and I hope he hasn't carried off another of my photographs."

CHAPTER XIX

WE CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAYS AT FORTMOUNT- HOUSE

“UGH! How I love the beautiful, unadulterated country!” Mr. Floyd shivered, standing before the sideboard at The Cedars, and pouring himself a stiff drink of Scotch whisky. “There won’t be any skating, either, with this beastly snow. *Why* did I leave my comfortable home to sway in Sidney’s ancestral draughts like a reed in the storm?”

“A good stout reed!” said Percival. “You know I didn’t urge you, Robert. I was very loath to come myself.”

“It’s another of Spriggy’s accursed ideas,” said Trevor. “By the way, Bobby, did you ever see this writing before?”

Mr. Floyd pursed up his lips as he studied the superscription of the envelope which his friend held out to him. “It looks sort of familiar,” he said with deliberation, “and yet I can’t place it. Who’s it from?”

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“That’s what I would give a good deal to know,” said Trevor, replacing it in his pocket. “I thought perhaps you might help me.”

“Anonymous?” Mr. Floyd inquired, forgetting his sufferings in his curiosity. “Let me see!”

“No, I thank you,” said Trevor.

“Anything about the Child?” Mr. Floyd persisted.

“No. Damn it, I’m sorry I mentioned it!” said Trevor.

“This is a nice spirit in which to begin the New Year,” said Mr. Floyd, virtuously. “It strikes me, Roy, that you’re very irritable lately. Hadn’t you better see a doctor?”

Trevor departed for the drawing-room, muttering something about a bull in a china-shop, and Percival joined Mrs. Townshend in the draughty bay-window, through the frost-coated panes of which they could hardly see the swaying sheets of snow. “You look pensive,” he said. “Are *you* wishing you had had the sense to stay at home?”

“No. I was making good resolutions for the New Year,” she said. “Do you want to hear my list as far as I have gone?”

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"It should begin with a solemn vow never to give another costume ball," he interrupted.

"Well, it doesn't. My ball is going to be a howling success. I begin with not spending more on my clothes than I do on my charities, or dancing three times running with anybody. I'm going without a new set of furs, and I shall make my children obey me as well as they do their governess. Oh, you may laugh, but I assure you it is no joke. And I really intend not to meddle in what doesn't concern me, though it is hard, when you see everything going awry, to remember that you have no right to speak, and can only hold your tongue and be sorry." Her eyes wandered, as she spoke, toward Mrs. Beverly, who was talking across the tea-table to Trevor, with the glow of the fire kindling her face into an elusive beauty. She turned her head with a sigh, and dismissed the subject. "And now for yours," she said.

"Must I make some? I shall only break them, and I think it might be more honest to dispense with them."

"You might try keeping them," she suggested. "You have been known to do such a thing."

"It seems to be harder than it used to be,"

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said Percival, speculatively, "and sooner or later there comes a time when you feel the game isn't worth the candle."

She turned on him with a sudden impulse. "You *can't* allow one disappointment to spoil your whole life! Forgive an old friend for speaking plainly, but I hoped—I believed—that all that was a closed book."

"So did I," said Percival, "or I should not have taken any risks. But books have a habit of opening themselves at the pages you have read the oftenest."

"I am sorry," she murmured, clearing a little space on the window-pane, through which she could watch the bare trees swaying in the wind.

"I'm sorry myself," he observed with a short laugh. "What are you going to wear to-night?"

"Something new and hideous. See how I have broken a resolution already. Don't you wish I were a man, so that you could snub my officiousness as it deserves?"

"If you were a man you would be a missionary bishop, and I trust I should treat your opinions with proper deference," said Percival. "But as Heaven has seen fit to make you my

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dear cousin instead, I shall continue to have faith in your discretion."

While the ladies dressed for dinner Mr. Floyd was fussing about with an air of great mystery, suspending bunches of mistletoe in unexpected places, abetted by the unworthy Jim Trevor. Miss Fenwick, descending first, was caught by both in the doorway, but basely refrained from warning the others, who fell victims in their turn. The announcement of dinner temporarily suspended these holiday pranks, but no sooner had Mr. Floyd returned to the drawing-room than he devoted his ingenuity to luring each lady in turn into the trap which he had prepared for her. Only Mrs. Trevor had so far eluded his pursuit, and as she escaped from him, owing to her greater fleetness of foot, the others joined hands in a circle around him to prevent his following her. She had slipped out of the room, and stood innocently in the library door, breathless with laughter, a trifle disheveled, and very lovely. Percival, who had followed her with a fan picked up at random, noticed, as he waved it vigorously for her benefit, that another of Bobby's holiday traps was suspended directly over their heads. They did not talk, though the

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coolness which had existed between them since the affair of the poster seemed to be dissipated that evening. As they stood there, a great crash as of falling furniture resounded from the next room, and a little sprig of mistletoe, becoming loosened from the bunch, drifted down on to the beauty's hair and lodged there. Percival, seeing this, yielded to temptation, stooped and kissed her. She wavered for a moment, undecided whether to treat the matter as a part of the evening's folly and accept the explanatory sprig which he held out to her, or to resent something in his face which she had not seen there since her marriage had deprived him of the right to love her. As for him, if he had commenced by being in jest, he was now deplorably in earnest, but he stood waiting for his cue, ready to laugh it off or apologize, as the case demanded.

"I thought," said the beauty, with lowered eyelids, "that you respected me."

In view of their common past the situation was fraught with delicacy, but he tried to make out a case for himself by stating an obvious fact. "If any of the rest of us had done it, you would not have cared. Why was it so much worse in me?" Then, seeing that she did not

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reply, he answered his own question. "Oh, I understand, I am the one of all others who had no right. But it was not respect that I failed in, Clip. Can you forgive me?"

"Circumstances won't permit us to quarrel, so I suppose I must try to forget it," said Mrs. Trevor, with a tremor in her voice, and turned away from him. In the adjoining room Mr. Floyd was being pelted with sofa-cushions by his whilom victims, until Mrs. Percival suggested that they should repair the ravages wrought by their childish diversions, and set out for the dance.

The ballroom was decorated as befitted the season, and every one appeared in gala attire and holiday spirits. At midnight the entire assemblage drank the old year out and the new year in, in glasses of egg-nog brewed in an enormous punch-bowl under the supervision of Mr. Dickman. To Percival the coming twelve months looked very black indeed, and as Effie, sipping her mixture with a grimace, confided to him that she drank it only because he said she must, his thoughts were dwelling remorsefully on the enormity of his own conduct. He had yielded to the impulse to treat Clip as, without the slightest compunction, he would

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have treated any other woman of his acquaintance, and the fact that he himself had broken down the barriers with which he had always hedged her sacredness was too appalling to be considered with philosophy. Of course she had been outraged—indeed, she must otherwise have fallen in his estimation—and it was merely a great forbearance and delicacy which moved her to tolerate his presence. He had been a brute to add to her burdens by his lack of self-control, he was guilty and ashamed, and yet, judge himself as harshly as he might, in his heart he could not wish the thing forgotten.

CHAPTER XX

IN WHICH MR. TREVOR BECOMES MORE DEEPLY IMMERSED IN HOT WATER

IT was at the anxiously awaited costume ball that Miss Fenwick felt the first thorn in her bed of roses, and this, curiously enough, was the sudden cessation of Percival's public homage, and the unprecedented manner in which he identified himself with the Brent party. Effie herself found that a ruff and farthingale robbed her favorite pastime of half its charms, and so could attribute his remissness in the matter of dances to the oppressive splendor of his attire. Uncongenial raiment seemed to clog the activities of many of her partners, but surely a man who has been conspicuously devoted need not allow a mere matter of pointed shoes and velvet mantle to estrange him from his customary circle. One end of Delmonico's ballroom was transformed into a Florentine garden, and here, sitting upon the edge of an improvised fountain, the recal-

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citrant Percival devoted himself to the entertainment of a rival belle, and later was seen in confidential converse with Mrs. Beverly, the only one of his immediate set whom he distinguished by particular notice that evening. Mr. Floyd, who, despite the defiance of his nose, had carried out his fatal project of appearing as Napoleon, was well pleased at the latter arrangement. "He sees how matters stand, and he's keeping her out of mischief," he reflected. "I wish to Heaven he'd cut Roy out." In so favorable a light did the example appear to him that he resolved to emulate it without further delay, and to utilize that tact and discretion so essential for the handling of delicate situations, and which he fondly fancied himself to possess. He therefore found time among his many cares to rush to her side whenever he saw Trevor approaching, and to slip into his cousin's seat on the fountain-brink, where he proceeded to exercise his talents for the public weal.

"What's Lawrence supposed to be? Oh, a herald? He looks like a sandwich-man. He certainly seems gone on Effie. What a little fool she is not to take Sidney while she can get him!"

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"She evidently has the sense to know that he only asked her to oblige Clip," Mrs. Beverly observed, not to be outdone in frankness.

"Oh, come, now, he's decidedly *épris* of her," he protested.

"The man is in love with Clip, and always has been."

"That isn't a nice thing to say," Mr. Floyd pronounced severely, though he had been known to be guilty of the same remark himself before now. "He used to be, I'll admit, and can you blame him? Everybody knows that they were practically engaged after she and Roy had their little falling out. Old Madam Trevor arranged it, and though it wasn't formally announced, the whole family entertained them. And then Clip threw him over for Roy again, and *I* have always thought that it was Sidney who patched it up between them."

"Most disinterested in him, I'm sure."

"Well, at any rate, Roy was in Boston, and Sidney went there, and directly afterward there was a new deal all 'round, and Clip was engaged to Roy again."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Beverly, in an enlightened tone.

"Sid was awfully hard hit, too, but good

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Lord! a man doesn't stay in love with the same woman for four years, especially when he sees that she's dead spoons on another man."

"But when he sees that she *isn't*?"

"That hasn't come yet," said Mr. Floyd. "Not that I shall blame her when it does."

"She has a most enviable temperament. She will never break her heart for any man," said Mrs. Beverly, "or give any one the satisfaction of seeing her ruffled."

"That's where you're wrong," Mr. Floyd averred. "You don't know Clip as well as I do, but you'll see! She's pretty patient, but she won't stand everything."

"I suppose any woman, given sufficient provocation, will show her claws," said Mrs. Beverly. "But Clip seems to be singularly consistent."

Mr. Floyd considered for a moment, then said, darkly, "You mean, you think she stands things because people who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones?"

"I didn't put it so frankly."

"And that she thinks *you* are an excuse for Sidney?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "You *are* impossible!"

MR. TREVOR IN HOT WATER

“So that’s your game!” said Mr. Floyd.

“Yours seems to be seeing how far you can go,” said Mrs. Beverly, “and I shouldn’t wonder if you found out pretty soon. You’re spoiled, of course, but do you think I will stand everything?”

“It looks like it,” he returned. “I knew you’d be fit to be tied about that clipping, and I know how people always act when you do things for their own good, but you see, on second thoughts, you behaved like a sensible woman about it, and I’m sure you will about this.”

Mrs. Beverly looked at him with small love, and bit her lip. There was a certain hopelessness in entering the lists with Bobby.

He continued in a soothing tone: “Now there are lots of people who would pretend to you that there was no talk, and rip you to pieces the moment your back was turned, but that isn’t my way. I come to you and tell you honestly what people say, and whenever anybody runs you down in my hearing, I’ll tell ’em there’s no truth in it. I have some influence, as you know,” he concluded, modestly, “but even I can’t hold things off much longer.”

It was doubtful whether he could have held

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off an immediate reckoning but for the opportune appearance of Percy Townshend, who was one of the few to wear his trappings with any sentiment more enlivening than resignation. Mr. Floyd strutted away, congratulating himself on his diplomatic success, but it was the worse for Trevor later in the evening.

Trevor's case, at this juncture, though perhaps not meriting the sympathy of any right-minded person, was none the less unenviable and embarrassing, and circumstances had arisen which rendered a decisive step of some sort an imperative necessity. Consequently Percival was favored by a visit at an unprecedented hour, and listened, while he breakfasted, to very pessimistic views on life in general, which were plainly but the prelude to more particular revelations.

"You've not been out already? Where's the sense of getting up to time the lark? God knows, the day's long enough without that!" he ejaculated. "Beastly bore it was last night. That infernal tin breastplate of mine weighed six pounds, to say nothing of my other miseries. I'd rather shovel coal for a living. Kirsch in your coffee at this hour? Man, do you want to kill yourself? I feel like the last end of a mis-

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spent life myself, but I have some regard for my stomach."

Percival, taking pity upon him, dismissed the butler, and prepared himself for an exposition of grievances. "Anything in the wind?" he asked.

"Read these," said Trevor, and handed a package of letters across the table to him.

Percival glanced through the offending missives. "H'm! Blackmail," he said.

"Pretty piece of business, isn't it?" asked Trevor. "Seem to be from two or three different people. Typewriting, as you see, and others in a disguised hand. But I'll take my oath I know that writing."

"I'm always getting that sort of thing. It's all in the day's work," said Percival.

"Well, if it were about your intimate affairs you wouldn't take it so coolly. Can't a man receive his own friends in his own house without being bombarded every mail by such rot as this? I've thought of Pinkerton. It's awkward giving such a thing to the detectives, but it's got to stop at some rate or other, for I can't stand it much longer."

"It is awkward," Percival admitted.

"And the worst of it is," the victim sud-

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denly confessed, "they have had the infernal insolence to bother poor Mrs. Beverly in the same way. Things have come to a pretty pass when one can't protect a friend from insult in one's own house."

"That's bad."

"Yes, it's all very well to sit there and say 'that's bad,' but what would you *do*?"

"Really, Roy, I can't give an opinion in an affair like this. It's no business for an outsider."

"'Outsider' be damned!" said Trevor, irritably. "You know you're one of the family."

"If you don't know where to put on the screws yourself, I suppose a detective is the only alternative," said Percival, reluctantly.

Trevor made another of his sudden avowals: "For all I know, Clip may be getting them too."

"I should think it unlikely, if she hasn't mentioned it," Percival protested, soothingly.

"She would see me in Halifax before she'd mention it," said Trevor, savagely. "I believe she doesn't care."

Percival discreetly said nothing.

"Has she ever said anything to you about it?" his friend asked, with sudden suspicion.

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“Of course not,” said Percival, shortly.

Before he had an opportunity of seeing Mrs. Beverly again Trevor was obliged to meet every other member of his household, each of whom expressed an irritating surprise at his matutinal expedition. The beauty was the last to appear, very pale and dignified, and to her husband's horror she held a letter in her hand. It might be quite an innocent missive—Heaven forbid that he should learn the contrary from indiscreet inquiries—but the sight of it goaded him to desperation, and he resolved to alter the intolerable situation without delay. No sooner was he left alone with Mrs. Beverly than he explained his intention to her, and demanded such letters as she had received, that he might submit them, with his own, to a detective. She brought them to him with a dramatic gesture which said, “See what I have suffered for you!” but she made no suggestions, and seated herself at the piano, picking out chords and humming to herself.

Trevor leaned against the piano. “I don't see how you stand it,” he said. “If I were you, I should want to make a bolt of it.”

“There are compensations,” she answered. “If I'm miserable one moment, I'm happy the

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next. And oh, I ought to be happy, to pay for all the rest!" She turned to him with outstretched hands, but he drew back with a spasm of virtue.

"I shouldn't have brought this on you," he said. "I thought that if you stayed here with Clip there could be no talk, and now——"

"Now she has had enough of me," she suggested, and rose from the piano.

"Not that, Nelly. I'm sure, she's always nice to you."

"Oh, yes, she's nice. But all the same, you shouldn't have offered to see me through with this. I see that it is more than you can manage."

"It isn't that at all!" he protested.

"Yes it is! A man doesn't begin to consider a woman's reputation until he has grown tired of her," she declared, passionately. "Oh, you knew, you *knew*, what my life was, and what part of it you have been ever since I met you there in Washington, and now I am only a trouble to you, an anxiety, something to put out of the way!"

"My dear Nelly, don't take it that way!" Trevor protested. "I was only suggesting that it might be more comfortable for you if you

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went home for a while, just until this blows over."

"*Home!*" echoed the wretched woman, and buried her face in her hands. He had never seen her cry like this before. He was frightened at the violence of her emotion, and stung by her taunts. Besides, she loved him! Alas for the sterner virtues that this truth is not to be denied: we always make allowances for those who have the good taste to love us. Undoubtedly he should have insisted then and there, for her good and his own, upon her departure, but he did nothing of the kind. Instead he tried to explain, tangled himself into a hopeless muddle, and finally left her in possession of the field.

In the hall Miss Fenwick accosted him with some severity. She too was crying. "I think you had better go to Clip."

"What is the matter now?" he demanded.

"I went into her room and found her lying on the floor," Effie announced, "and at first I thought she was dead, and we have been all this time bringing her to herself."

Trevor found the beauty lying on the sofa with her eyes closed. She offered no explanation of her faintness, though he, in fear and

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trembling, suggested various possible causes. Her maid was running in and out, and Effie fussed over her with a fan and salts, but even had they been alone together, her pride, and his complicated sense of guilt, injury, and incipient jealousy, would have formed sufficient bar to the needed understanding. So they drifted a little further apart, and Mrs. Beverly remained triumphant.

CHAPTER XXI

LAY-OVERS FOR MEDDLERS

“WHAT’S the matter with old Sid?” Mr. Floyd demanded of his aunt, whom he met at a wedding. “I haven’t seen him for a week.”

“Sidney is not well,” said Mrs. Percival. “You know how hard it is to find out what ails him if he ever is ill, but I waylaid the doctor myself, and he told me that the poor boy’s nerves were in a dreadful state, and that he mustn’t be irritated. I’m sure, I can’t imagine what he should have to irritate him, except that, of course, he is a little gouty at times, just like his poor father, but Doctor Burns says that if he doesn’t get away from town he won’t answer for the consequences. I asked him this morning why he didn’t go to India, or somewhere, but he says he can’t. I’m sure, he was anxious enough to go last spring, before the Fenwicks came.”

“I’ll go directly home with you and cheer

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him up a bit," Mr. Floyd obligingly volunteered, and proceeded to enliven the invalid's solitude with a week's news. "You're a humbug, though," he said. "I thought you must be at the point of death, and here you are, up and dressed. What were you reading? The new Gossip? Let's see!"

"They have been taking your name in vain," said Percival, with a false air of regret. "Read this paragraph."

Mr. Floyd, with a sniff, settled himself to the perusal of the item. "We learn that a new contribution is about to be made to the library of polite literature. Mr. Snobby Lloyd, who for a decade has been the most formidable rival of Mr. Springheels in the gentle art of conducting a cotillion, is now engaged on a volume of personal reminiscences, entitled Ten Years a Leader. This work is said to contain valuable chapters on the correct manner of snubbing an upstart, making a young woman the fashion, introducing a brand of champagne, and giving advice without fear or favor." "Damn their impudence!" the angry gentleman broke forth at this point. "What are we coming to? *Me* write a book!" he cried, and the scorn of his tones is better felt than de-

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scribed. "Me write a *book*? I vow, I'll have the beggars up for libel!"

Percival's mouth twitched, but his cousin was too much perturbed to notice trifles. "The insolence of these wretches is beyond belief," he went on. "Putting *me* in the same category as fellows like Wingfield—a beggar I never noticed, by Jove, until Clip took him up last summer! But the idea of my writing a book, and me despising authors with all my heart! It's no less than blackmail!"

"Speaking of that," said Percival, "I am going to ask you to use your influence for me." He rose with considerable reluctance from his comfortable seat, went to his secretary, and, unlocking a drawer, produced a bundle of letters. Mr. Floyd's face was already so red that a shade more or less was unnoticeable, but some apprehension caused him to fidget in his chair, for if he feared any one on earth it was his deliberate and mild-mannered cousin.

"Now," said Percival, approaching him, with the suspicion of a limp in his gait, and a perfect suavity which Mr. Floyd found a trifle appalling, "I have had enough of this kind of thing. It's dirty, and it's dangerous, and I shouldn't be influenced by it if it were to go on

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from now until doomsday. I propose with the help of Heaven to mind my own business, and I trust you can induce the ingenious authors of these things to do the same."

"You don't hold *me* responsible?" Mr. Floyd gasped.

"All I have to say on the subject is that I want no more of them," Percival replied, and consigned the offending missives one by one to the flames of the gas-log.

Mr. Floyd, very much agitated and extremely cross, departed in such haste as might be, and was seen no more that day. Sad to say, however, his alarm proved to be but temporary, and was no bar to the furtherance of an ingenious scheme which he had long nursed in his imagination.

Percival had religiously kept away from the Trevors' until a great sheaf of Miss Fenwick's bills recalled the conflicting nature of his duties, and he made a morning call. His ward, however, proved to know little about her own expenditures, and called in Mrs. Trevor's assistance, basely leaving them alone together before the accounts were audited. The beauty's manner was so discouragingly business-like that her coadjutor was preparing for

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a speedy departure when a message arrived from Mrs. Beverly, asking for an immediate interview.

"I trust it is nothing more about the Buddhists," Percival hazarded, "or is she a Moham-medan at present?"

"I think you know very well what it is," Mrs. Trevor said in an icy tone.

"I'm probably very stupid, but I don't."

She flashed on him suddenly: "*How could* you send her that horrible poster?"

Percival waxed indignant in his turn. "You have a flattering opinion of me," he said.

"What else could I think?"

"I know I'm in disgrace," he answered, stiffly, "but I didn't realize that I had fallen so low as that."

"Forgive me!" said Mrs. Trevor. The tears had sprung into her eyes. "You mustn't think too much of what I say. I have been so unhappy!"

This confession, the first that had fallen from her lips during the long months of her trial, startled him into an unprecedented bluntness. "Why don't you assert yourself?" he asked.

She pressed her handkerchief to her eyes,

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and did not answer for a moment. It was her conscience that finally spoke in her trembling voice. "I have no right."

"It was my fault, not yours," he said. His own voice sounded strangely to him, and in the silence which followed, Mrs. Beverly's step was audible on the stairs. Clip gathered up her memoranda and went out without saying good-bye, and the other woman came in.

"Isn't it a trifle early for comic valentines?" she demanded, revealing the fateful poster to his gaze. "You omitted your signature, but I recognized your style without it."

"I'm sorry you think I sent you that thing," he began, rather relieved than otherwise at this direct attack, but she had the floor and meant to keep it.

"You're not stupid enough to deny it. Effie recognized it at once, and blurted out the whole truth before Clip could stop her, but I've seen your portraits before. I always told you that you disliked me, but I hardly expected you to furnish me with such a proof."

"I can't hope that you will believe me," said Percival, "but upon my honor I don't know who sent it to you, and I'm extremely sorry it happened."

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"It doesn't make the slightest difference whether you're the originator of the pretty trick or only a catspaw," said Mrs. Beverly; "it's the sort of thing one can't be expected to forgive. And since I shall naturally deprive myself of the pleasure of your society in future, I want to ask you one question about a thing which has puzzled me from the start. The least you can do is to answer it truthfully."

"Anything to whitewash my character!" he assured her.

"Well, then, why, of our *partie carrée*, are you the only one who isn't complaisant?"

Percival swallowed some very bad language before he ventured to reply. "You see," he explained at length, with a fine impersonal air, "your theory is based on a wrong assumption. It never was a *partie carrée*. I hadn't even the right to resent the existence of a third person until you gave it to me just now."

"You have been a model of forbearance," she assured him. "I find that I have underestimated your virtues—with all the rest of the world."

"We are all open to mistakes," said Percival, politely. "Are you sure that this is a final settlement of accounts? Because there

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was a little reference to a catspaw that was really unworthy of your penetration.”

“If I had been more your style of woman, I should never have had occasion to make it,” she retorted, “but I wasn’t young or pretty or, saving your presence, *silly*, enough to be excusable.”

He stood by the door with his gloves in his hand. “You decline to accept my apologies, then?” he said with an air of great regret. “I’m sorry—we were so congenial!”

“Devil!” she ejaculated, to his retreating footsteps, while he was cursing Mr. Floyd.

CHAPTER XXII

THE DELUGE

It was storming violently when Archie's cab finally turned down the avenue, and for the third time plowed its way through the deepening slush to Washington Square. His young countenance was haggard, and he trembled like a nervous horse. The sleet whipped the windows and froze there, and the street lights looked faint at the wind-swept corners. "If Mr. Percival isn't in now, I'll wait until he comes," the agitated young man announced at the door.

Mr. Percival, it seemed, had returned, and was dressing. Archie, hardly waiting to be admitted, precipitated himself into his guardian's room, and sank into a chair. "I've been chasing you since morning, from Harlem to the Battery," he said with poignant reproach. "I've been here three times, and nobody knew where you were. Have you seen Jim?"

"No, he hasn't been here," said Percival.

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"We must find him!" cried Archie. "If we don't find him at once it may be too late."

Percival's heart sank. "What is the trouble?" he asked.

"We're disgraced for life!" Archie announced. "You can't do anything. Nobody can do anything. We can never hold up our heads again."

Percival sat down. "You had better tell me the whole story," he said, and Archie faltered forth his miserable recital of officiousness and foolishness, ending with his face hidden on his arms.

"And Jim?" said Percival.

"Jim behaved in the noblest manner," said the loyal Archie. "He had done nothing, really, and he need not have told, but he said he was as much to blame as I was, and that I shouldn't go through it alone, and he owned up to Roy."

"Blackmailing for benevolent motives!" sighed his guardian.

"I've been a blackguard," Archie cried, "and there's nothing left for Jim or me but to blow our brains out."

Percival laid a restraining hand on his shoulder. "You can't do that, you know," he

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said. "It's a nasty business, but you've got to pull out of it somehow. What did Roy say to you?"

"I don't remember. He was frightfully cut up," Archie admitted. "Neither of them seemed able to understand why we did it."

"Your motives *were* a trifle difficult to fathom," said Percival, putting on his coat.

"She was so unhappy," Archie burst forth, sobbing, "and I wanted to help her! And now—if she could tell Jim that she never wanted to see him again, how must she feel about me?"

"She told him that?" Percival inquired, apprehensively.

"Yes, and he's desperate. He has left the house. I thought he might have come to you."

"You're right. We ought to find him," said Percival. "Now, as you seem pretty well done up, you had better stay here, and keep him if he does come. I'll take your cab. And remember that we are going to pull through somehow," he added, moved by a spasm of pity for the silly boy, who had been after all more dupe than knave.

He went first of all to Mr. Floyd's spacious apartment on Fifth Avenue, which presented a festive appearance, with lights streaming from

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the windows. The lively gentleman had, in fact, been entertaining an afternoon bridge club, of which he was a member, and the air was heavy with the fragrance of cut flowers when Percival entered the drawing-room, for Bobby, while he preferred to be liberal at another person's expense, was given to display when forced into hospitality. "You should have come a few minutes earlier, Sid," he exclaimed. "I've had Mrs. Douglas, and the Thornes, and that crowd, and a ripping Fish House punch. Nice orchids, eh? Seen the Child? Why, no, now I think of it, he was to have played, but he didn't turn up."

"I should advise you to turn out and hunt for him," said Percival.

"Off again, is he? Oh, I can tell you where to catch him, but I've got to dress now," said Mr. Floyd, hurriedly. "Just ring the bell, will you? My man is gone. He took to giving me advice—*advice*, by Jove!—so of course I had to ship him. So now I have in this idiot from the stables, and—Lord! Who is he bringing in now?" He rushed into the adjoining room and slammed the door, leaving Percival to receive the newcomer, who sailed through the portières with much clinking of jet beads, and

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a strong waft of heliotrope — a handsome woman, opulent of figure, still young under her dotted veil, pausing in her advance with a little gesture of recognition to exclaim, “Mr. Percival!”

His heart sank still lower, as he said, “I was just thinking of you, Mrs. Belden.”

“For the first time in some years,” she added. “No, don’t go. I believe we are here on the same errand. Where is Bobby?” She looked curiously around the apartment as she spoke. “No, he doesn’t expect me, but I have something to say to him, and I don’t care how many people hear me say it. I’m not going to have you or any one else think that *I* betrayed those poor boys, or that I’ll let them bear the blame alone, as he wants to do. I hate a sneak!”

The bedroom door opened cautiously, and Mr. Floyd emerged, at once agitated and indignant. “This is a pretty piece of business!” he cried. “I’ve got a reputation to lose, and you’ll compromise me before you get through. Why on earth didn’t you send for me, if you had to see me?”

“Send for you, indeed!” she echoed, scornfully. “I wanted to see you. Mr. Trevor’s de-

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tectives have been watching me, and now Archie tells me that that little cat of a Fanny whom I took into my house out of pity has confessed the whole business."

"Who—the typewriter girl? Good Heavens, you don't say so!" Mr. Floyd ejaculated, turning very pale.

"Of course, she knew nothing about you and Jim," Mrs. Belden continued, "but she told the detective that she saw Archie post the letters, and that I dictated them to her. So *I* get the credit of composing them, and Jim has confessed, when all he knew was that there was something in the wind, and *you* go scot-free!"

"Why couldn't he have held his tongue, then, little fool?" Mr. Floyd demanded.

"Because he's a dear good boy, and won't desert his friends," she retorted.

"Well, I don't see why you felt obliged to come here bothering me. Lord, what a shock you gave me!" he said in an injured tone. "Bursting in on me, and giving people a wrong impression of me!"

Mrs. Belden pulled up her sleeve, and revealed to Percival a bracelet sparkling on her wrist. "Does Bobby give diamonds for noth-

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ing?" she demanded, scornfully. "And yet he doesn't see why I come to him now. Didn't you promise me," she cried, turning on him fiercely, "that I should have no trouble about it, and that if there was any fuss *you* would take the blame? And now you think I'm going to let you break your word."

"Why did you employ a woman you couldn't trust, then?" he demanded in his turn.

"Who, Fanny? Hadn't I every reason to look for gratitude from her? Didn't I find her sick and starving on a bench in the Park, and take her right into my house, with nothing to do but exercise my dogs? Her own sister couldn't have treated her better, and now she talks about her conscience troubling her. Conscience, indeed! It will trouble her still more to-morrow, when she's getting her breakfast in a soup-kitchen, the thankless wretch!"

"All this has nothing to do with me," said Mr. Floyd, with an attempt at his grand manner, but laying hold of Percival's coat-sleeve as he tried to escape.

"Ah, but it will have, if I choose to speak!" she replied. "And if Jim has to suffer, I don't see why you shouldn't keep him company."

Mr. Floyd fairly wrung his hands. "Now,

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Sidney, will you listen to this?" he entreated. "And I'm due at Mrs. Winchester's at eight."

"You won't be due there again, if I have my way," said Mrs. Belden. "The idea of getting little boys into a scrape like this, and then turning your back on them! It's all his fault, Mr. Percival, and don't believe him when he denies it."

"What do you want? I'm a ruined man," Mr. Floyd protested, "but I suppose you're bound to finish the job. As to having a row with anybody, though, I won't, and that ends it. I've got to dress. I'll leave you with Mr. Percival here. You can make your terms with him." He rushed once more into his own room, and there was a sound of a key turning in the lock.

"There's a man for you!" said Mrs. Belden.

"Yes, but he's my cousin, I regret to say," Percival replied, "and there is no sense in making the affair any worse than it is. I myself should have preferred your letters if they had been signed, but I'm willing to overlook all that for the sake of peace."

"I told him they wouldn't do any good," she said, "but he knew better than anybody else."

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When I think of those poor boys, I could kill him!"

"I have some regard for them myself," said Percival, "and I am sure you want to help them as much as possible. Now how can we atone for the inconvenience to which you have been put?"

"The thing I want most is to know where that boy is," she declared. "Why hasn't he been to me? If his own people turn against him, at least he ought to know that there is one place where he is always welcome."

"There is another—my house—and if matters are to be patched up, as I hope they may be, you must see for yourself that it is the best place for him," said Percival. "Send him to me if you should see him before I do, and you will place me under a lasting obligation."

"I will. I'll do anything for a friend. That's my nature," she explained. "That is how Bobby imposed on me so." She grew pathetic over her wrongs, and emotional at Jim's plight, but her voice took a different tone when the conversation touched on business.

Mr. Floyd was already attired when Percival entered as the bearer of his visitor's ultimatum, and groaned painfully as he drew a

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check to "Bearer." "You'll have to help me out, Sid. I may not have that much in the bank," he said. "Oh, she's a terrible woman!"

"You'll kindly give me a chance to leave first," said Percival, and under the circumstances his cousin had no choice but to accede to his request. Mr. Floyd's parting interview with the lady was brief, and though it commenced on her part in a spirit of restored amity, she descended the stairs a few moments later with two checks in her pocket-book and wrath in her heart, while he fortified his shaken nerves with brandy before facing his fellows at dinner.

CHAPTER XXIII

MRS. TREVOR SPEAKS

As the fruitless quest for the fugitive continued, the question of what was to become of him when found weighed less upon the mind of his most active pursuer than the haunting fear that his vagaries would no more perplex his friends and family, and that a pistol-shot had proved the solution of his mundane future. After twenty-four hours of suspense, with nerves on the alert for bad tidings, Percival received a fresh incentive, in the shape of a despairing note from the beauty. "It makes no difference now *what* he has done," she wrote in conclusion; "only bring him safely back to me!" And now, turning away from Mrs. Belden's deserted house, a keener apprehension than ever tormented him. Had she gone away to escape further consequences of her imprudence (which she must know could not be brought home to her, under the circum-

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stances), or did her absence foreshadow another disaster?

In the waning afternoon of the third day of Jim's absence, Trevor, unable longer to endure his own society, mounted the stairs to the nursery. Solitude had become more dreadful to all the household than the constrained companionship which was its alternative, and as he seated himself in a corner he saw, by the half light which came from the hall, that his wife was lying on the sofa, with the baby half asleep beside her, and that Effie, at the window, was gazing into the street below, where the lamps already flickered upon the carriages splashing through the slush.

"Has Archie come in?" Trevor asked.

"He is going to stay at the Percivals' to-night," said Effie. Alarmed by the results of the beauty's harshness, she had consented to a reconciliation with her own brother, and visited him in Washington Square, where he still hid his disgrace. That afternoon, too, Mrs. Townshend, moved by indignation, had departed from her usual caution, and opened her heart to the young person as never before. "The woman has no delicacy—no decency!" she had exclaimed. "How can she stay here

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after what has happened? And yet, when I asked her to come home with me for a few days (purely from a sense of duty, I can assure you), she flatly refused."

"I hate her!" Miss Fenwick declared then, with her small hands clinched. And this hatred still swelled in her heart as she stood in the window, wondering at Clip's patience, and scorning it. A hundred instances recurred to her mind where forbearance had ceased to be a virtue, and justice clamored for a speedy awakening of that force which slumbered beneath an external weakness. Did it truly exist, the spirit which was said to animate Mrs. Trevor? Did she no longer love her husband, or was her love so slavish that she would endure this and everything? "If it were *my* house!" Miss Fenwick reflected, and those who assert that violet eyes are incapable of flashing should have seen the lightnings which hers launched upon a recalcitrant world. In another moment the fires were quenched. A brougham had stopped before the house, and she recognized Percival's liveries. Two people alighted and came up the steps. There was something in the bearing of the two figures that told even Effie, no keen observer, that some calamity was imminent,

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and the same presentiment kept her silent. She crossed the room and knelt beside the sofa, taking the beauty's disengaged hand in hers. The baby stirred and whimpered sleepily. "Poor little man, it is his bedtime," said Mrs. Trevor. "Effie, will you ring for Jane?"

"Let me take him to her," said Effie, and going through the hall, met Percival at the head of the stairs. For once he had no eyes for his godson. Jim followed him, hurrying in silence past Effie, and into the nursery. At his approach his sister rose and ran toward him with outstretched arms. Her husband, too, sprang to his feet.

"O Jim!" she cried. "Oh, my dear, how *could* you think I meant it?"

He disengaged himself from her embrace. "I've done it this time," he said. "I'm married."

For a moment no one spoke. The light from the hall illuminated a little patch of wall-paper on which the story of the Sleeping Beauty was pictured, woven in with vines and trellises, and presently threw Percival's shadow over the figures as he entered the room, with a confirmation of Jim's news written on his face. Mrs.

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Trevor appealed to him: "Sidney, it can't be true!"

Trevor came toward the table, knocking over a pyramid of blocks, which fell with a crash to the floor. "That woman, of course?" he said.

Jim gave a ghastly little laugh. If he had not realized the enormity of his act before, it came home to him now, in the presence of his family. He, James Lee Trevor, twenty years old, with his manhood before him, and his overweening pride to reproach him, doomed to share his name with a woman whose history was public property—a finger-post for the town! Was any one more alive to the shame of it than he? As for the others, he had dragged their pride through the dust, but it was *his* life, not theirs, that he had wrecked.

"When did it happen?" Trevor demanded.

"Night before last," said Jim, stung to defiance by his tone. "What's the use of talking about it? You said you'd done with me."

"Oh, it's my fault!" the beauty moaned.

"No, don't say that. You understand now that I only wanted to help you," he protested, "and that's all I ask. I wouldn't have come here again but for that."

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"Sidney, perhaps *you* will explain," Trevor began, but interrupted himself to listen to the voices in the hall outside—Effie's expostulating, Mrs. Beverly's high and incisive. Surely any one should hesitate to intrude at such a time as this. It was with a spasm of disgust that he saw her darken the doorway, and this feeling Jim voiced as she entered.

"Ah, Mrs. Beverly! You still here?"

"To condole with your unhappy family," she answered.

"Don't! Don't!" Trevor protested, hastily. "I'm sorry you happened to come in, Nelly. These beastly family rows——"

"I beg your pardon. Mr. Percival and I are *de trop*," said Mrs. Beverly, "or perhaps *he* isn't."

"Oh, stay if you like," said Trevor, irritably, "since you find it agreeable."

An inarticulate sound escaped the beauty's lips, and Percival, seeing her sway, stepped to her side. Trevor was about to follow when a little significant laugh from Mrs. Beverly checked him. "She doesn't want *you*!" she said. Her voice was veiled, but it carried far enough to spur Mrs. Trevor's will into mastery of her physical weakness. She swept across

MRS. TREVOR SPEAKS

the room, stately in the half light, suddenly dominating the scene. Her hand was on the bell. Trevor, watching her with apprehensive fascination, noticed that it was the call to the stables.

“You’re not going out at this hour?” he said.

She turned and faced him directly. Her voice, though she did not raise it, had an edge that he had never heard before. “I have ordered my carriage,” she said. “Either this woman or I will leave the house to-night. You must choose between us.”

To Effie, sobbing in the hall with her fingers to her ears, to Jim who had forfeited the right to stand at his sister’s side, and to the other woman who awaited the issue, the decision seemed to turn upon a hair. All hope and fear trembled in the balance, but only for a moment. When Trevor crossed to his wife’s side, her rival knew that the end had come for her, and of all the wretched people in the room she was perhaps the most to be pitied. This was no temporary eclipse of her sun, but night, inevitable and unending. She had known the truth before she thrust herself into the whirlwind. Even her own folly had hastened the parting

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only by an hour or two. So without a word she left for the last time the man whom, lawfully or unlawfully, she had loved to her own undoing, while the victor in this shameful contest waited only for her disappearance to lose unobtrusively all consciousness of her bitter success.

CHAPTER XXIV

FUTILITY

“It’s beastly mean in you!” Mr. Floyd exclaimed, indignantly. He was walking up the avenue at a tremendous pace, swinging his heavy silver-handled cane, and his breath clouded the frosty air. “What’s the use of being connected with people if you know less about their affairs than any confounded outsider, by Jove? Now I know there’s been a double-barreled row at the Trevors’, and Beverly’s got the sack, and you were there and saw it all, and I’m your own cousin, and you won’t tell me a damned thing!”

“When you look at it impartially, why should I?” Percival inquired, with an exasperating pretense of opening an argument.

“It’s always just my luck that *you* should be the one to be on hand when anything happens. Lord! I wouldn’t be as infernally close-mouthed as you are for a million dollars.”

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“It’s not always an inconvenience to you,” his cousin observed, dryly.

“Well, those were exceptional circumstances, and however appearances may be against me,” Mr. Floyd averred, “you know I never get into women-scrapes, thank Heaven! Well, do laugh, then! You were hot enough in the collar about it at the time, all the same. Is Clip very sick?”

“Haven’t you been there to inquire? It might be civil.”

“I was afraid it might be a little awkward,” Mr. Floyd explained, “but I’ll go with you this afternoon if you say so. This is Spriggy’s last Thursday, and I’ve promised to look in. Are you coming? You’re generally remiss about those things.”

Mrs. Townshend was receiving in a violet gown, and gave them a fatigued but cordial welcome. “Stay until this crowd goes. Bobby, you will find an affinity in the tea-room.—Yes, Mrs. Trevor is still confined to her room. She has had too much responsibility, and it’s something to launch a *débutante*, I can assure you. She always keeps up until the last gasp. Oh, yes, we hope it is nothing serious. She has been ill like this before.—I wonder how many

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times I have said that to-day?" she speculated, turning once more to Percival, as her other interlocutor departed. "I hope I may be forgiven for the lies I tell. Only three women left, thank goodness, and they are talking about us and won't go for half an hour. Yes, I will have some tea, with lots of arrack in it, for I'm tired to death, and heartsick besides. When I came back from seeing Clip yesterday I said to Percy: 'Whatever you may do, never *dare* to let me find you out!'"

"Is she really worse?" Percival asked.

"Yes. It was two weeks ago yesterday that the wretched creature left, and every day Clip seems to grow weaker. If ever a woman had just cause for nervous prostration, Clip Trevor had."

"It must have been very trying," Percival remarked.

"*Trying!* That is all you men know about it!" Mrs. Townshend exclaimed. "Though I will do Percy the justice to say that he was terribly shocked from the first, and it was all I could do to keep him from interfering. But I talked to Clip—oh dear, how I talked to her!—and implored her to take a stand, and she was quite stiff, even with me, and wouldn't hear a

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word against that good-for-nothing husband of hers. I don't care if he *is* my cousin, I've always said he wasn't half good enough for her. And then this business of Jim's is enough to break one's heart. Oh, what a place this world is! I can't sleep at night for worrying about my poor children, growing up to all sorts of heartbreaks and miseries. And there's another thing, too. In confidence, *what* do you think of Bobby?"

"There's no use in wasting your breath on him," said Percival. "I used to think that there was some good in him. Well, blood is thicker than water, and since the world at large doesn't know what a hound he is, I'll hold my tongue and give him another chance, but the sight of him makes me sick."

"I knew it was his doing," said Mrs. Townshend. "I feel as though we had all been dragged through the gutter. But I sha'n't tell Percy."

"After all, perhaps it is an injustice to judge him from the ordinary human standpoint," said Percival, reflectively. "Bobby isn't a man. He's a *thing*."

"And things, I suppose, must be white-washed when they happen to belong to us?"

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"It seems the only way," he agreed, arranging the cushions behind her as she sipped her tea. The divan on which she sat was pushed against a partition of Moorish fretwork, through which floated two purring, middle-aged voices. A footman paused before them with punch and sandwiches, and while Percival stood, glass in hand, the voices crystallized into words, to burn the ears of the involuntary eavesdroppers.

"Do you think it will end in a divorce, or only a separation?" one inquired. "She doesn't believe in divorce, you know."

"Ah, but it's different when it comes nearer home. You'll see that she is anxious enough to secure one for Jim," said the other. "And if she were free, every one knows that Sidney Percival would marry her to-morrow."

Mrs. Townshend, who had commenced a desperate fusillade of chatter, continued it after the footman had moved away, but Percival disregarded her kindly pretense of deafness. "Does everybody talk like that?" he burst forth in a white fury.

"They are just a pair of malicious old tabbies. I will have this wretched lattice-work taken away to-morrow," said Mrs. Townshend.

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"You can't stop their tongues," said Percival.

"You're not going to be angry with *me*? Then, if you must go, would you mind stopping at the Trevors' and telephoning me how Clip really is, for Roy is so unsatisfactory!"

"I ought to keep away, it seems," he grumbled.

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Townshend, succinctly. "Remember, I'm anxious to hear before dinner."

Percival found his friend at home and eager to see him. "You know, we start for Aiken on Monday, if Clip is able to travel," Trevor announced, "and I suppose the Fenwicks will have to go to you. Effie wants to come with us, but you must talk her out of the idea, for Clip must not be bothered with her. I don't know how she is to stand the journey as it is, but the Doctor says she must have immediate change of scene, or he won't answer for the consequences."

"I had no idea it was so serious," said Percival.

"Oh, it's serious enough. She keeps sending for Spriggy, and when she comes, she begs her not to let her talk. I don't know what she's

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afraid of saying. I wish Spriggy could go with her. She doesn't want me."

"Sick people have all sorts of fancies," said Percival. "It won't last."

"You don't know her as I do," said Trevor, bitterly. "I tell you, it's in the blood. She'll never forgive me."

"Nonsense!" said Percival, vehemently. "You're all broken up now, and everything looks black to you. You need a change yourself, and when you once get settled and away from the worries here, all the good things will come back together."

Trevor looked mournfully skeptical. "Have you had that talk with Jim yet?" he inquired.

"Good heavens, I'm not an exhorter!" the luckless Percival protested.

"Well, I'm too irritable, I tell you frankly. I should only row him, and he never listens to me anyhow. And somebody must put things plainly to him."

"Yes, I suppose so," Percival agreed. "Don't worry about it. You've enough on your mind as it is. Well, good night, old man. I hope you'll both feel better in the morning."

He walked home—a matter of two miles, which afforded him a singularly unfortunate

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opportunity for reflection. There are occasions when even unwelcome society is wholesomer than an introspective solitude, especially for a gentleman whose nerves have already undergone a somewhat protracted strain. For a few blocks he kept his mind off more serious matters by a vigorous and impartial condemnation of screens and old women. He cursed Bobby with all his heart and soul. Hot waves of shame and disgust swept over him at the manner in which long forbearance had been requited, and family pride, of which he had held himself guiltless, asserted its claims in the face of the outrage to which it had been subjected. But not even this goad, keen as it was, could long distract his thoughts from the real issue. Of course there would be no divorce. Roy was a good fellow, and it must all come right in the end. But if she were free——!

She was not to blame if people talked. If universal sympathy were withheld from her in the hour of her trial, if she were credited with motives of which all the world should have known her guiltless, the fault was his, and his alone. The memory of his one overt offense against her was a constant reproach to him, quickened by the bad news he had heard of her

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condition. How would it end? How could he wish it to end? He was tired, skeptical, old—yet not too tired to have his friends' burdens thrust upon him, not too cynical to treasure his ideals, not so old but that the blood coursed quicker in his veins at the sound of one woman's voice and the world seemed empty at the prospect of her departure. She had never cared for him. God forbid that she ever should! and still it was his hand that had added the last drop to the bitterness of her cup. And the night was coming fast. Curtail it as he might, there still remained those black hours to be endured, with dead follies mocking, sins long past thrusting at him out of the dark, regret ever living, and the heaviness of years to come. His very self-respect galled him. In the sunlight the bugbears of the night dwindled to insignificance, but in the silent hours they loomed up huge and hideous, until he saw himself forced to choose between chloral or a padded cell. "Why shouldn't I drug myself?" he demanded impatiently of what he was beginning to regard as a false pride. "Why can't I at least manage to get drunk? Perhaps on the whole a drunkard would be as efficacious a guardian as a maniac." While there was some-

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thing to urge in favor of this argument, it failed to altogether convince him of its soundness, especially when he remembered that an added responsibility was on its way to Washington Square.

CHAPTER XXV

IN WHICH MISS FENWICK BECOMES ENGAGED

MISS FENWICK, her dog, her triple mirror, her bottles and porcelain boxes, her skeleton frames and boot-trees, and all the hitherto unaccustomed luxuries without which she would now have found existence insupportable, had been domiciled for several days in Washington Square, and radically altered the atmosphere of the house. Now, of a morning, a young lady in a bewildering *matinée* descended to the breakfast-room to preside over the coffee-pot and skim the society column. At luncheon the same young person, in street dress, would gossip in an animated manner with Mrs. Percival and squabble with Archie. Late in the afternoon she was often to be found seated in the china-room, at the tea-table, rather pensive, inwardly complacent over the artistic folds of her wonderfully concocted tea-gown. In the evening, being a young person of many engage-

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ments, she would appear radiant in satin or chiffon, invariably pausing in the drawing-room to afford Percival an opportunity of admiring her attire in case he was not to accompany her. On Sundays she walked to church carrying her prayer-books with devout ostentation, and escorted by a body-guard of youths. Sometimes Percival was pleased by her presence, sometimes he found her a nuisance. It was certainly an agreeable novelty to have a bright face opposite him at the breakfast-table. It was curious to observe the sudden invasion of youths, and the small coquetries of Miss Fenwick as she entertained them by the becoming light of a dozen wax candles in crystal lustres. Her flowers, her notes and cotillion favors pervaded the house. Silhouette occupied the cushions hitherto sacred to the Angoras, and was taken for a daily promenade, decked out in ribbons and silver chains. Percival was initiated into the trials which beset the path of a maiden *à la mode*—the extortions and treacheries of modistes and milliners, the spiteful speeches of envious friends, the stringencies of grandaunts, and the shocking difficulty of making one's accounts balance properly. This last feat, indeed, she never accomplished, and

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brought her little book to him with injured tears, that he might decipher from her mysterious hieroglyphics the approximate amount of her expenditures. He listened to hints of Tom Lawrence's absurd prejudice against poor Harry Wingfield, who was eager to paint her portrait for the Spring Academy, now that he had finished Mrs. Trevor's; he heard what compliments everybody had paid her, and was consulted in various small matters of external adornment. His opinion was solicited as to her progress in horsemanship, for the invidious remarks of her friends had finally caused her to conquer her fears and disport herself in the saddle. He was growing to look forward to these little confidences by which all that she did and felt was laid open before him, for she was a very transparent and artless young person still, in spite of her airs and graces, and could no more have reserved her little affairs for privacy than she could have convinced her guardian that she was not empty-headed.

She was sitting in her favorite place one afternoon after her last visitor had departed, with all the wax candles lighted for Percival's benefit. He had declined tea, but he leaned back in his chair tasting the pleasures of pro-

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crastination. In the drawing-room his mother was still entertaining visitors; their voices sounded indistinctly through the portières.

"I have seen your aunt to-day," he said to Effie.

"Dear me! I suppose she has sent me a lot of horrid advice," said the young lady with dismay in her tones.

"No, I was the recipient on this occasion," said Percival. "I'm afraid of her. An absolutely faultless person is a rare and appalling sight. I'm sorry to detect signs of amusement on your face, Miss Fenwick. I trust you don't think me guilty of the presumption of ridiculing your venerable aunt."

"Well, you are," said Effie. "Besides, Aunt Katherine is not perfect, by any means. She has her faults, like other people."

"Indeed she hasn't," he declared. "Where other people have besetting sins, she has besetting virtues. I wish she played the races or took chloral. I should feel far easier in her presence."

"No, but really, what did she say?" Effie inquired.

"I don't feel myself fitted to repeat her words," said Percival, modestly, "but I will

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venture to state that she said to me exactly what she said to you on the occasion of your last visit. A good thing will bear repetition, you know."

"Then she told you what she thought of you," said Effie with apprehensive delight.

"Yes, and of the Trevors, and the Townshends, and my mother and Bobby. She wore her hair in scallops, which I have observed is always a sign of an extra coat of virtue. As she looked at me I felt all my hidden faults springing to the surface like drowned people when you fire a cannon."

"Doesn't she make you feel as if there were a hole here?" Effie inquired, feelingly, pressing the frills of lace over her heart.

"No, but her grandniece does," said Percival.

"Now you're talking nonsense. What did she say about me, especially?" asked Effie, playing with the teaspoons.

"She asked me how you passed your time, and whether your mind was utterly given up to empty frivolities. Then she inquired about your associates, and trusted I hadn't noted anything unbecoming or forward in your behavior. She added that she didn't consider me a fit per-

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son to be entrusted with the guardianship of a young girl, and there she had me."

"Well, what did you tell her?" Effie inquired, anxiously.

"I assured her that you were a model of deportment, much interested in church work, and quite set upon eschewing the frivolities of this world," said Percival. "You see, I had to make my assertions in the dark, so I said what I thought would propitiate her. I told her that, far from taking pattern by my unregenerate ways, I could see that every day you grew to resemble her more and more, and so you do, you know. When you glare at me as you're doing now, you're uncommonly like her on a small scale."

"Now, Sidney Percival, you are simply teasing me," said Effie, hotly. "You know you told her nothing of the sort. And besides, you ought to know what I'm like by this time. You've certainly seen enough of me."

"And how much do I know about you?" he demanded. "Perhaps if she had presented me with a little schedule, I might have filled it out to your satisfaction, as: 'Nose, straight; eyes, dark blue; taste in dress, ravishing; temper, needs a firm hand and a light rein.'"

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“Oh dear!” said Miss Fenwick, wrathfully, “you are the most provoking man!”

“You will feel still more strongly on the subject when I tell you that your aunt desires to see you on Saturday afternoon without fail,” he observed.

“Didn’t you tell her that your mother and I were going to a *matinée* with Mr. Lawrence?”

“I wasn’t aware of it.”

“I’ve told you at least twice,” said the young lady, with an unmistakable pout. “Now I shall have to go there and explain. How tiresome!”

“She doesn’t approve of Lawrence, by the way.”

“He is quite the nicest man in our set,” Effie declared. “I thank my stars that I’m not under Aunt Katherine’s thumb. I’d rather have even you for a guardian.”

“Thank you,” said Percival, fervently.

He met her the following day on the Avenue above Fourteenth Street, taking her dog for an airing, and started to accompany her home, but Silhouette seemed more pleased at his advent than his mistress. She greeted him with chilly airiness, supposed he had been to Mrs. Townshend’s that morning, and apologized for

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not being as entertaining as a married woman. If the truth must be told, Miss Fenwick was piqued at the small effect which her fascinations seemed to produce upon her guardian. He was nothing to her; still, when a man has once—in fact, twice—offered his hand to a young lady, a certain amount of devotion on his part might be regarded as consistent and natural, and Percival, though attentive enough in company, was certainly anything but lover-like in private. How different was the behavior of Lawrence and Mr. Wingfield! They appreciated her, if Percival did not. This man was spoiled, but she proposed to show him that she was neither a doll nor a child. So she was very distant with him, until a lamentable accident occurred which changed her airiness to alarm, and caused her to turn for succor to her nearest protector. The aristocratic Silhouette became enraged at the remarks of a spotted mongrel in the tail of a dray, and in his efforts to reach the offender succeeded in slipping his collar, and plunging through the black, slimy mud, amid the dangers of the Fourteenth Street crossing, in pursuit of the impertinent plebeian.

Miss Fenwick called in vain. He paid no

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heed to her entreaties, nor to Percival's commands, and with his tail proudly curving he disappeared among cross-town cars, wagons, and carriages. "He will be killed!" wailed his mistress. "O Sidney, can't you get him?"

Percival had already started in pursuit, amid the defiant yelps of the spotted dog and the derisive cheers of two newsboys. A policeman made ineffectual clutches at the elusive little beast, and passers stopped to see the sport. When, after several vain efforts to rescue the inconsiderate atom from his peril, Percival at length succeeded in dragging him forth from the threatening hoofs and wheels, his temper had suffered almost as much as his attire, and he strode to the pavement holding Silhouette by the scruff of the neck, and hailed a passing cab. "Don't try to embrace him yet," he said. "You will only cover yourself with mud. I'll take him home and have him washed."

Miss Fenwick was vexed both at his tone and his proposition. "As if I minded the dear pet's being a little dirty!" she cried. "Come here, my precious, and let me put your collar on. You don't want to go home in a nasty cab, do you?"

"Who is to fish him out of the next puddle,

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pray?" Percival inquired, extending his hand for the collar and leash. "I suppose you will prefer to walk, but since I couldn't well be dirtier, there's no objection to his coming with me."

As he slammed the cab door Miss Fenwick was filled with a fine scorn for a man of his age who could show temper over such a trifle. When she reached home Silhouette was already in the tub, and his preserver was nowhere to be seen. At luncheon, however, he reappeared, immaculate and peacefully disposed. Silhouette pranced up to him with the utmost cordiality, but Effie was on her dignity. "I'm sorry to have troubled you," she remarked, loftily. "It wasn't at all necessary."

"Do you know, Miss Fenwick, that this is the second time I have had the honor of wading through the mire to restore your possessions?" he inquired with malice prepense.

"Goodness!" said Effie, flushing hotly. "I didn't think you knew that I was the same person."

"You haven't changed so as to be unrecognizable," he assured her.

"I thought I had improved," she remarked, defiantly.

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“Your manners were rather better then, were they not?” he asked. “I believe on that occasion you said ‘Thank you.’”

“I meant to thank you to-day. I beg your pardon. I wish I had given a street boy a quarter for doing it for me,” she said with increasing hauteur.

“For thanking me? How truly kind!” said Percival.

“For getting Silhouette, of course!” said Effie, now almost dissolved in tears.

At tea time Mr. Lawrence was announced — as usual. Percival was allowed to enter unobserved, and had dressed and descended to the library before a rustle of skirts apprised him of his ward’s approach. She entered looking conscious and expectant. “I suppose I ought to tell you,” she said, “that I’m engaged.”

“Really!” said Percival, with an interest which somehow failed to please her. “Well, I’m not as much surprised as I ought to be. I suppose I may ask the name of the happy man?”

“It’s Tom,” said Effie.

“I congratulate you with all my heart,” said Percival with a cordiality which she found de-

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testable. "I've known him for fifteen years, and there isn't a better fellow going. I'm sure he will make you happy." He was shaking hands with her. Didn't he care at all? Was he positively glad that she was going to marry another man? It would certainly seem so.

"You are the first to know. I sha'n't even tell your mother until I have written to Clip," she went on. "I hope she will like it as well as you do."

This suggestion chilled Percival's enthusiasm. It suddenly occurred to him that Mrs. Trevor would not like it as well as he did. He had lost sight of her objections to Lawrence; now they rose before him in alarming array, and the fact that he could not share them would, as he was well aware, prove no barrier to her strictures on his carelessness.

"You think she won't like it?" Effie demanded.

"It is hard to please everybody," he said, evasively.

"But *you* think it's all right? You're sure you're not provoked because I didn't ask your opinion first?" she persisted, hopefully.

"Absolutely sure," he declared, and dinner

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being at that moment announced, offered her his arm with an amount of frank approval and good feeling that was maddening to a young person who had looked for a very different reception of her intelligence.

CHAPTER XXVI

SHOWS HOW DIFFICULT IS YOUTH

MISS FENWICK sat alone in the china-room, munching candied violets and studying a fashion paper, for this evening she had no engagement. Mrs. Percival was lying down with a headache, Lawrence was at a stag dinner, and time hung heavily on her hands. She surveyed a page of unnaturally willowy brides and bridesmaids with an impatient sigh, and brightened perceptibly when she heard Percival's step approaching.

"What am I to say to people who ask me pointblank if you are not engaged?" he demanded.

"I know it was your Aunt Augusta," Effie exclaimed.

"Your unerring instinct has divined it. She said Mrs. Foster had told her that she heard it reported on all sides, but that you had not seen fit to notify *her*. I temporized basely with Aunt Augusta, but it's awkward about your aunt, you know. She's likely to send for me at any

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moment and demand the truth, and I'm blessed if I know what to tell her."

"How can I tell any one until I've heard from Clip?" Effie asked.

"How odd that she hasn't written to you."

"No, it isn't odd," Miss Fenwick confessed, "because I haven't told her yet."

Percival looked at her in astonishment.

"Well, I'm sure, you acted as though you thought she wouldn't be pleased," she explained, guiltily, "and they all say she mustn't be excited or worried. So I thought—I would wait."

"Then you'll deny it for the present?"

"Oh, dear! I hate to say what isn't true," she wailed, on the horns of a dilemma.

"Don't you think you had better see your aunt?"

"I saw her only two weeks ago, that time she sent for me, you know."

She waited until he had reached the door once more before she admitted, "Perhaps I had better go. Can't you take me to see Aunt Katherine this evening and get it over with?"

"I should be delighted," said Percival, "but unfortunately I have asked some old friends from the South to join me at Daly's, and as

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they will be here only a few days it is quite impossible to put them off."

"I never saw any one with so many Southern friends as you have," said Miss Fenwick, disparagingly, "always turning up when it *occasionally* happens that I depend on you to take me somewhere."

"I'm awfully sorry," said Percival. "Some other time——"

"I have no other time. To-morrow there is Harry Wingfield's Studio Tea, and I won't have red eyes for that."

It was at Wingfield's gorgeous studio that they next met, amid a babel of voices and a crowd of curious friends intent on seeing Mrs. Trevor's portrait, which stood in the place of honor, awaiting criticism. Under a huge Chinese umbrella stood the inevitable tea-table, tended by Miss Brent and Miss Fenwick, who paid each other compliments and furtively watched the door. When Percival finally reached their corner no one could have been more suddenly confidential than Effie. She even managed to outgeneral Miss Brent, and cause herself to be carried off to look at the portrait with him. "Isn't it lovely?" she cried. "I wonder if he will do half as well for me?"

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“Aren’t you rather extravagant?”

“Oh, he wants to give it to me. By the way, I didn’t go to see Aunt Katherine this morning.”

“Didn’t you?”

She looked at him intently for a moment, with an impatient, distressed expression on her pretty face. She was wearing the little bracelet which had been his Christmas gift to her, and this she twisted and turned on her rounded wrist. “Why don’t you *make* me go?” she burst out with a sudden passion.

But he declined to be serious. “Make you?” he repeated. “You will do as you please, Miss Fenwick. I have no authority over you.”

“You are my guardian,” she persisted.

“I am your very humble servant,” he corrected.

“Here comes Tom. Take me back to the table,” said Effie. “*He* won’t pretend a lot of things that aren’t so—and besides, Mrs. Townshend wants you.”

The next morning she went to call upon her aunt.

The visit was a brief one, for Mrs. Foster plunged without preliminaries into the vital

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subject, and Effie, whose little airs and graces invariably collapsed at sight of her grim relative, could only protest that nobody had been told, and that when you hadn't announced it, it couldn't be considered an engagement.

"I say nothing of the scandals which his name must recall to every one," said Mrs. Foster in appalling tones. "It may be our Christian duty to forget that he is a nephew of the notorious Mrs. Graves. I could not expect you to be influenced by the fact that he leads an utterly frivolous and aimless existence—but that a Fenwick should marry a man who at any moment is likely to become a maniac, is a blow for which I own I was unprepared."

Had Effie been in the enjoyment of her usual force of conviction, this speech would merely have called forth a burst of indignation. As it was, it deepened those forebodings which had secretly tormented her for days past, and she could only protest faintly that Tom was no more likely to lose his wits than she was. In spite of herself her aunt's words had presented her lover to her in a new aspect.

"Am I to conclude that Mrs. Trevor approves of this connection?" was the next inquiry.

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"I don't know," Effie faltered. "Mr. Percival approves of it, but I don't feel sure about Clip."

"I propose writing to her myself, and learning her opinion of this young man," Mrs. Foster announced.

"Oh, you mustn't do that. She is sick, and ought not to be worried. It will only make her worse," Effie said in alarm. "I will put off my engagement. I'll do anything, if you only won't write to her."

"You may tell this young man," said Mrs. Foster, "that he must consider your consent annulled for the present. If, on Mrs. Trevor's return, you still persist in your infatuation, you may send him to me, as you should have done in the first place. I am amazed that Mr. Percival should allow you to think he approved. It must be one of your silly ideas. He strikes me as a man of excellent judgment, and how he can tolerate such a match *I* am unable to conjecture. However, it is just as I expected. It would be a relief to all of them to get you off their hands."

Effie had reached the door by this time, but at her aunt's parting shot her courage reasserted itself, and she blazed upon the good

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lady. "Yes, I know we are a burden to them all. I know they must wish that they were rid of us. That is why I was glad that somebody really wanted me. But they have never let us know in any way what a nuisance we have been to them. They have always treated us as though we belonged to them. It was you who made me feel like an intruder, and it's your fault that I said yes to Tom."

When Percival returned late that afternoon he found Effie waiting for him, and was forced to listen as attentively as a severe headache would permit to the latest developments in her affair. When she had announced Mrs. Foster's ultimatum she requested him to break the news to Lawrence, as she felt herself unequal to the task. He heard her to the end with exemplary patience, but did not at once accede to her requirements.

"It will be only asking him to do what it would have been more prudent to do in the first place," he reassured her.

"No, it won't. I feel that if I say anything at all, it's the end," she declared with conviction which nothing could shake. "And I know that Clip won't like it either."

"Don't make a bugbear of Clip. She would

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be the first to realize that this is your own affair and that you have a right to decide for yourself."

"Then you think I ought not to break it off?"

"Of course, if you feel it would be final——"

"I know it would."

"Then if you really care enough for him to risk quarreling with your aunt, you won't break with him."

She suddenly came over to him and laid her hand on his forehead. "Your head aches, doesn't it?" she asked in sympathetic tones, "and I'm such a selfish pig, I never noticed that you looked badly until now." She fussed over him, despite his protestations, insisting on his lying down, plumping the cushions, wetting her handkerchief in cologne and giving him skilful and refreshing little pats with it. It was all great nonsense, but the little offices became her, and it occurred to him that Lawrence would have a very good time of it after all. She had drawn a chair close to the sofa, and continued her operations as she asked, "Does it hurt you to talk?"

"Not at all," he answered, mendaciously.

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“Well, then, where were we? You see, I must decide about this.”

“It ought not to take you long,” said Percival. “Do you love him, or don’t you?”

“Oh, I—I don’t know,” said Effie. “Your hair all curls up where it’s wet. Did you know it?”

“You told me some time ago that you would never marry a man unless you loved him with all your heart,” said Percival. “Now, really, I should think you would know if that were the case.”

“You don’t know what girls have to do, and the things they have to bear,” said Effie, damply. “I wish you could know, just for one minute.” She sat staring at her cologne bottle for a moment, then announced with a little gasp, “No, I suppose I *don’t* love him.”

“Then why did you accept the poor devil?” Percival asked, severely. “I’m afraid you’re a heartless flirt, Miss Fenwick.”

“Men don’t understand those things,” said Effie, miserably. “What ought I to do? Should I write him a note? Everybody knows I write a dreadful note, and when I’m excited I spell half my words wrong, and you’ll have to tell me what to say.”

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“You’re sure you won’t regret it?” said Percival. “You’re sure you don’t care for him?”

Effie choked down a sob. “Yes,” she said, “I’m perfectly sure that I don’t love him—nor anybody else—and never did, and never shall!” With this declaration she rose and ran out of the room.

CHAPTER XXVII

SOMETHING BREAKS

LAWRENCE, the ill-treated, had been lunching with Mrs. Townshend, and was still pouring his griefs into her sympathetic ear when Percival was announced. He had not taken his dismissal philosophically, nor did he scruple to express his opinion of Percival's conduct in the matter, which no amount of expostulation on his hostess's part could induce him to regard as pardonable. "You may make what excuses you choose," he maintained with conviction, "but it was an underhand way of acting, and if he hadn't approved, he should have said so at once, and to me, instead of making her play fast and loose with me as he did. I've been fond of Sidney for fifteen years, but I see I never knew him before. It's a trick *I* wouldn't play on a mere acquaintance, to say nothing of a friend of years' standing."

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So pointedly did he exhibit his feelings on Percival's entrance that a cloud of embarrassment settled upon the company which his departure could hardly dispel.

"I wouldn't have sent for you to-day if I had remembered that I had promised to listen to his tale of woe," said Mrs. Townshend. "You will soon have a perfect horror of my house."

"It is natural enough that he should consider it my fault," said Percival, ruefully, "and I suppose I was to blame in the first place for acting on my own responsibility, but upon my word, I was never trained to chaperon a girl, and my experience is costing me dear. There's nobody I like better than Tom, and he thinks me a cad."

"He will get over it," said the consoling Spriggy.

"No, he won't. And we shall both come and whine to you," said Percival. "But you told me to come."

"Yes, I must have you for the Coal and Kerosene Club. You won't have to say a word," she assured him; "it's only Gibson pictures, and all we ask of you is to be yourself."

"Who is going to pay two dollars to see me be myself?"

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"If I had not seen you for a long time, I might pay as much as four," she said.

But Percival was proof against blandishments. "You promised me," he said, reproachfully, "that if I would be a Huguenot Lover, 'just this once,' you would never require anything in the Thespian line of me again."

"That was before I had grown unscrupulous in an official capacity. Now I will commit any desperate deed to turn an honest penny," she confessed. "Besides, I have been teaching a wriggling, whining, tale-telling sewing-class all the morning, so beware how you cross me."

"Is that your Lenten penance?"

"I do it all winter. Just now I am visiting tenement houses as well, which is even more discouraging. It is dreadful to discover how many people are undeserving."

"You needn't go to the slums for that. Charity begins at home," said Percival.

Mrs. Townshend glanced first at him, and then at her bric-à-brac. "If you think it would cheer you," she suggested, "you may smash anything in this room except my new Tiffany glass."

"Do I look destructive?"

"Well, I have always noticed that when a

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man is depressed, the most reviving thing he can do is to break something—always provided he hasn't a wife to scold."

"Fie, Spriggy! Would I scold any woman who had consented to make me happy?"

"That sounds very fine, but it's quite certain you wouldn't make *her* happy, at the rate you are going on," said Mrs. Townshend with decision.

"Well, I always told you so."

"But it wasn't always true. When your hand shakes like that, I should be blind if I believed that things were as they should be with you."

"Of course, I'm not very well," he admitted. "I ought to have got out of this treadmill a year ago. It naturally gets on your nerves to act as nursery governess when you haven't been trained to the business."

"There is something more than that," she said with conviction.

"I find it truly edifying to be a private mission class of one," said Percival.

"How long is it since you have slept?" she demanded, accusingly.

"Oh, I don't know."

"Why don't you do something for it?"

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“ I have tried various things,” said Percival.
“ You don’t seem to like the result.”

“ I don’t blame you, really. I should go mad if I had insomnia,” she suddenly admitted.

“ No, you wouldn’t. You would plan a couple of working-girls’ clubs and a woman’s hotel, and design your summer frocks,” said Percival.

“ Yes, I think I should. Why don’t you plan nice things to do for people? ”

“ Because I’m burdened enough with my unearned increment without that. It’s such a curse to me that I am beginning to believe it must be the same to everybody else. And the worst of it is, I’ve no right to shirk it.”

“ Somebody told Percy that they had struck oil on some land of yours. It was in the yellow papers, with a dreadful black picture of you,” said Mrs. Townshend, “ and another picture of the man who sold you the land, sitting on a bed in a garret, as though you were distinctly to blame for it.”

“ Yes, they have been calling me a plutocrat again. Several kind friends sent me marked copies. Now that man,” said Percival, reminiscently, “ simply haunted my office until I finally took his land to get rid of him. He had been trying to get the thing syndicated as a coal-

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mine, but the outlook seemed hopeless, and he frankly told me that he must have the money to square the congressman of his district who was opposing some other scheme he had in view. Of course I should not have encouraged bribery and corruption, but I gave him his price, and now if the poor devil had kept his oil-fields he might in time have achieved the distinction of being called a grinder of the poor."

"When will the poor ever show as much charity to the rich as the rich show to the poor?" Mrs. Townshend demanded. "We are so hounded, so misrepresented, so harshly judged!—and the forbearance sometimes seems to me to be all on one side. We are harder with each other than we are with them. When my servants rob me, I don't send for the police. I try to remember their temptations, and I talk to them and give them another chance, but who remembers *our* temptations? I know I have an inclination to send Bobby and the boys to Coventry for a thing that morally isn't half as mischievous as the article in that wretched paper, for which nobody can be punished."

"I never wanted the cursed money," said Percival. "I never cared for more than enough

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to take the ugliness out of life. I've tried being poor, and I didn't like it, but I swear the days didn't dawn on me as heavily as they do now."

"I used to feel that way about mine sometimes before I was married, though it was only a pittance in comparison to yours," said Mrs. Townshend, "but it is only because you have the responsibility to bear alone that it seems so heavy."

"Then it is likely to be no lighter," said Percival, very foolishly, although he knew that such a statement of his convictions always incited his cousin to an eloquence for the endurance of which he lacked his usual patience.

"I suppose you are conceited enough in many respects," she began, "but in one way I honestly wish you had a better opinion of yourself. Because one girl happened to care for another man, you persist in believing that no woman would love you for yourself, and that all they see in you is your money. No doubt there are a few mercenary little wretches like that Porter girl, who regard you solely as a name and a fortune, but you ought to know that the majority of us are capable of appreciating what is really good in you, and

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even liking some things that are not so good. However much you may hate it, you shouldn't allow yourself to be *haunted* by a dollar-mark. I myself knew a nice girl once who would have been only too glad to marry you without a penny."

"Why didn't I know it?" he asked. "I should have been very grateful for a good woman's love."

"Women don't want gratitude—and you didn't care to know. She recovered from it. It wasn't easy," said Mrs. Townshend, "but perhaps it didn't make a worse woman of her, on the whole. Other things came into her life, and she took them as they came, and loved them, and in time she forgot sufficiently to be considered very happy by her intimate friends. And this nice little tale has a moral, if you choose to apply it to your own case."

"Spriggy, I can't!" said Percival. "God knows, I wish I could, but it's impossible."

"It isn't generally so hard for a man to forget!" poor Mrs. Townshend reflected. She had certainly not expected that her well-meant remarks would add to his depression, but when had such a discourse ever the desired effect? He had always shown himself docile with the

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women of his family, knowing the impolicy as well as the futility of anger, but resentment may smolder in the most long-suffering person, and it was with an exasperating flippancy that he responded to the remainder of her conversation, nor would he consent to accompany her on her drive in the Park. She realized that his state was precarious, and in this knowledge she had played her last card and played in vain. She was sorry for him; she had done what she could, but she could not forbear a little impatience at his refusal to avow any adequate reason for his very impossible frame of mind. She was better aware than any one that, had the late Mr. Townshend tied up his property, Percival would have found a certain joy in defying his restrictions, but unfortunately he had left the fulfilment of his charges to the honor and discretion of a man who was capable of being hampered by both. Of course he was scrupulously conscientious in his attention to affairs which he abhorred, and of course he was obstinate in clinging to the ghost of an unrequited attachment, but why should things be worse with him now than they had been at any time during the past four years?

When Percival returned to Washington

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Square he was still angry, with Spriggy, with himself, and with fate—the blind, unreasoning anger of a slow-tempered man who has been driven too far. By the waning daylight he seated himself in the china-room to look over the mail that had accumulated in his absence, but his head ached so that the words were simply blurs on the paper. He had grown to hate the sight of letters, but having fallen into the habit of thinking that whatever was distasteful must necessarily be right, he went through the pile with more system than understanding. The tea-table was deserted, to his relief. Much as he dreaded solitude, he dreaded still more the thought of seeing Effie just then. Why could not Spriggy have let him alone? Why had she felt it necessary to tell him that story? Would there ever be anything in his heart again but a hopeless disgust and revolt at all the petty miseries of his daily life?—the setting of an example in whose efficacy he disbelieved, the renunciation of many dear and worthless habits, the grind of hated routine, above all the enforced association with those whom he earnestly desired to avoid. What had he to show for it all, and of what avail were the most honest efforts to forget, when all the

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while the terrible ungovernable longing for an absent woman whom he had no right to love tormented him day and night? It had been a good love at first, a love of which no one need have been ashamed. Why had the knowledge of her unhappiness, the possibility of her freedom, so changed and brutalized it? He hardly noticed Effie's entrance until the rustle of her dress swept by him, and the faint fragrance from a knot of violets at her breast. She went to the fire, and stood with her elbow on the low mantel and one foot on the fender. He could see that she was all in black, and that she had been crying. Something in her dress, her attitude, the gleam of the firelight on her hair and the waft of her violets, seemed for an instant to bring Clip into his very presence, but the illusion passed as she spoke.

"It is so cold!" she said with a little shiver, holding out her hands to the blaze. As he did not answer she peered forward into his face. "What is the matter?" she asked.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "I didn't realize that you were speaking."

"I've been thinking about poor Tom," she went on. "He was always so nice, and I have been a wicked wretch. But what else could I

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do?" She bowed her head and hid her face on her arms. Evidently she expected to be comforted. He was suddenly filled with an angry intolerance of her grievances, and even of her presence. Whatever she might have been before, to-day she was an intruder. What right had she to come to him with her silly troubles, expecting comfort when he had none of his own? From instinct he tried to say something properly sympathetic, but the words died on his lips. At length she raised her head and looked at him, half defiantly, half appealingly. Never before had she brought her sorrows to him in vain, but now he seemed to have forgotten her presence. The silence, broken only by the ticking of the clock, weighed heavily upon her. Standing on the shelf at her elbow was a tiny cup, bearing the Sèvres mark, with garlands and medallions of cupids and shepherdesses. She played with this nervously, glancing down at him from time to time. Finally she could endure no more. "Sidney," she said, with a note of alarm in her voice, "what is it? Won't you tell me?"

This question, for the second time in one day, proved too much for his self-control. He rose abruptly, so startling her that she dropped

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the cup, which crashed into fragments on the hearth. She cried out in distress, "Oh, I'm so sorry!"

"It's of no consequence," said Percival, mechanically.

"But you were fond of it. I will try to have it mended," she protested, stooping over the fragments.

"Don't do that. I have been trying to pick up the pieces all my life, and it's of no use," said Percival. "Better let them lie."

But Effie remained on her knees before the grate. She seemed suddenly to have developed a sixth sense with regard to him—his moods, his thoughts, his perils. In that moment she was a woman, with a woman's aching heart. "Don't go away when you feel like this," she entreated. "I won't trouble you any more. No one shall trouble you. Only don't go."

"Don't waste your sympathies on me, Effie," he said. "I'm not worth it. And don't try to keep me here any longer. I must go, and go my own way."

"Where?" she asked, almost fiercely.

He laughed a little as he went toward the door. "Pardon my frankness—to the devil, I think," he said, and left her to her own devices.

CHAPTER XXVIII

SUNDAY AFTERNOON

“WELL, here we all are again!” exclaimed Mr. Floyd, who, having despatched a peace-offering in the shape of a basket of cut flowers, now felt himself quite safe in paying his respects to the Trevors. Every one save Mr. Floyd had been invited to Sunday luncheon, and he had dropped in. Jim, to be sure, was not there, but the Fenwicks, who had moved their belongings once more, the Townshends and Percival, had assembled to celebrate the return of the absentees. “This seems like old times,” the sprightly gentleman declared. He was beaming, eager, determined to make the best of a bad business and brazen his way back to favor again.

Mrs. Townshend had been relating her philanthropic trials to a sympathetic audience, ending with a most cruel instance of misplaced charity. “On Ash Wednesday night Percy was walking from the elevated station, and he saw

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a poorly dressed man walking along the street in front of him. Suddenly the man appeared to catch sight of something in the gutter. He rushed to it and picked it up, and began to devour it ravenously, and Percy saw that it was a dirty old crust of bread. Well, of course he was dreadfully harrowed, weren't you, Percy?—and he spoke to the man——”

“He told me a most pitiful tale,” her husband interpolated, “and said he had been starving for days.”

“So of course Percy brought him home, and I was harrowed too,” Mrs. Townshend proceeded, “and cook gave him a good dinner, and we gave him some money, and positively ran our legs off looking for respectable employment for him, and the man seemed very grateful——”

“He was French,” Townshend interposed.

“Well, the very next evening we were going down to see Aunt Louise, and whom should we see but this same man again? And *what* do you think he was doing? He took a crust of bread out of his pocket, and placed it carefully in the gutter and walked on. Then he came back, and when he saw us coming, he made a rush for it, and began to gnaw it again as

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though he were famishing. And Percy and I were so indignant that we spoke to him and told him what we thought of him."

"He pretended to understand no English," Townshend concluded, "and my feelings were so aroused that my French was unequal to the occasion, but I reported him at once to the Board of Corrections and Charities."

"That reminds me," said Mr. Floyd, "that as I was passing your house the other day, Sidney, I saw a common-looking man hanging about the entrance, and when he noticed that I was looking at him, he sneaked away into the Park and sat down on a bench. I didn't like the looks of it. It's the fashion nowadays for cranks to shadow people of any prominence, and you remember your stables. If I were you, I'd engage a plain-clothes man to see that I didn't get assassinated one of these days."

"It was probably that unfortunate fellow Gessner," said Percival.

"Oh, the man who sold you the oil-fields?" Mrs. Townshend asked.

"Yes, he is in very hard luck. His congressman evidently pocketed his bribe, and continued to oppose his bill, and he is crazier than

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ever. He annoyed mother so much by coming to the house that I was obliged to give orders that he was not to be admitted," said Percival, "and since then he has taken to sitting on the door-step. He says I can send him to Congress if I choose, and he seems to think I'm under some obligation to do so."

"You ought to have him arrested," Mr. Floyd declared.

"I doubt his being crazier than some who are already making our laws for us," said Percival, "and I'm awfully sorry for him, but I begin to realize how Haman felt about Mordecai."

"I hope you haven't given him money," said Percy Townshend, severely. "As Americans it is our duty to discourage this wholesale bribery."

"My conceptions of my civic duties are becoming more exalted every day," said Percival, as they rose from the table, "and more hampering to a normal line of conduct. What luck did you have with your kodak, Clip?"

"You are the only person who has not seen my pictures, so you shall have a private view," she answered, and spread them out on a little card-table for his benefit. "You haven't as

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much news for us as Bobby has, so I must do the talking."

"Nothing happens while you are away," he assured her in self-defense.

"Such a compliment!" she exclaimed, and made him a little mocking bow across the table. "You continue to exist, I suppose?"

"Well, Miss Fenwick has been taking me to dances, and Spriggy has dragged me to bazaars. I have cultivated the aunt, and I think that is all, except writing to you."

"Your letters were nice and amusing," she commented, "but just a little unsatisfactory. You hardly said a word about Effie."

"Now I leave it to your sense of justice whether my letters didn't read something like this: 'To-night I am going with Miss Fenwick to the opera. Yesterday I met her at two teas and a wedding. To-morrow Spriggy gives a dinner before the assembly, and of course Miss Fenwick will be of the party.'"

"But you didn't write: 'Effie grows prettier every day. She is like sunshine in the house. I don't know how we ever existed without her, and we really can't give her up when you come home.'"

"We do miss her," said Percival, "but of

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course she was anxious to get back to you. The important part of my communications seems to have escaped you. I have made progress with the aunt. She positively unbends to me, and last week she consulted me about her investments."

"And for all my pains I never succeeded in thawing her!" said Mrs. Trevor. "What a diplomatist you would make!"

"Yes, I am one of those perverted geniuses fitted to adorn every profession but the one I was obliged to adopt," said Percival.

"I prefer you in your present profession," she said.

"What is that, if you please?"

"'As always yours, Sidney Townshend Percival,'" she quoted, laughing.

He laughed too. He was absurdly glad to see her again, and to hear her mocking little compliments. Mrs. Townshend left the sofa where she had been talking to Trevor, and rested her arms on the back of the beauty's chair. She was glad to see the evident improvement in Percival's spirits, and yet it hurt her a little that her own well-meant efforts to amuse him had ended in signal failure, while her cousin's mere indifferent presence had evoked

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that better mood of which she knew him capable.

“Isn’t it delightful to have everything just as it was before?” Effie sighed, blissfully. Mrs. Townshend routed out a hymn-book from the music-rack, and seating herself before the long-closed piano commenced to play “Lead, Kindly Light,” in which everybody joined. Even Mr. Floyd sang, loudly and out of tune, and was heard to remark that it reminded him of the old days at Fortmounthouse, before anybody got married, and everything was spoiled. Effie felt very virtuous as she sang out of the same hymnal with Percival. Trevor needed no book, being able to rattle off hymns by the dozen, owing to an excellent early training, and his unalterable conviction that he was a pillar of the church. Mrs. Townshend inwardly considered this a private thanksgiving service, and sang with fervor, but the beauty slipped away before the end of the singing, and sought her own room, in the certainty that she was a wicked woman, and that however it might and must appear to the rest of the intimate circle, nothing could ever be the same to her again. She could not feel toward Roy as she had felt before their estrangement. His inconstancy

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had finally changed her love to toleration. She had been patient and forbearing, but perhaps in the gentlest of women there is a lack of that charity which truly pardons. This was terrible, but there was something more terrible still, which had come as a revelation at sight of Percival's face on her arrival. She had been glad to see him before, but never like this. She hid her face in her hands for very shame, realizing for the first time the peril in which she had stood for years. This was her punishment for ceasing to love her husband—this awful terror and shame and grief. How could she foretell, when she felt herself contaminated by Mrs. Beverly's presence, that soon in her own heart she was to find the same sin? How could she see him day after day, as she had done once in the security of her pride and ignorance, when she had grown so glad at his coming, so sorry at his departure, so full of thoughts concerning him to whom she had hitherto accorded only a casual place in her life? He had smoothed her path in a hundred ways, had shielded her from countless annoyances; he had been to her a tower of strength whose shelter and comfort she had never appreciated until she had left them. Her latest absence had

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opened her eyes to many things where she had once been blind. And she might have been his wife to-day, if she had only known! The poor young creature knelt by her bedside, saying little incoherent snatches of prayer in her horror at the blackness of her own heart, and when, at the close of the singing, she returned to her guests, she was thankful for the twilight that mercifully hid the traces of her tears.

CHAPTER XXIX

FALSE DAWN

"I WAS sorry to wake you, dear," said Mrs. Percival, as her son appeared, rudely recalled from a hardly won slumber, "but Bobby is on the sofa in the library, and he says he has come here to die. He thought at first he would die at Spriggy's, but he found they had gone to Atlantic City, so he crawled back into his cab and came here, and I don't know what to do with him."

"Why couldn't he have chosen some other night?" Percival grumbled.

"Would you mind telephoning for Roy? Bobby says he must have all his friends about him, and Simmons is so vexed with him for waking you that he is of no use whatever," his mother pursued, as he followed her into the library. It was two o'clock, a windy night in early April, and on a couch, propped up with pillows, Mr. Floyd was gasping and groaning. Even Percival, to whom these periodic attacks

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were familiar, was struck by the sudden haggardness of his cousin's full face, and his livid hue, and summoned the doctor and Trevor, "Though it is great nonsense getting Roy out of his bed when you will probably be all right by the time he gets here," he observed to the sufferer on his return.

"I'm sorry to trouble you," Mr. Floyd gasped pitifully, "but I was so lonely! It's well enough to live in bachelor apartments, but it's another matter to die in them. Besides, I'm not afraid, but there are things on my mind. And I want you to give Spriggy my pink pearl and my Vixen pup, and tell her she's the only woman I ever loved."

"If he would only have a hot-water bottle!" Mrs. Percival wailed. The disapproving Simons promptly presented one, but the sufferer waved it away, and proceeded faintly, with intervals of unconsciousness, to give his parting instructions.

"You'll look after my horses," he said, "and tell mother I forgive her for not being here to say good-by to me. And I'm sorry about that letter business, but I'm glad I sent her the poster. Anyhow, I meant it for their own good. And, Sid, I know you're down on me, and I hate

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like the devil to apologize, but I wish you'd say that we part good friends."

The little man's suffering and contrition appeared so acute that Percival's heart involuntarily softened toward him, as did Trevor's, who arrived before the doctor. Together they soothed Mr. Floyd, noted his testamentary dispositions, and administered such relief as they might before the appearance of medical aid. Toward morning his condition improved, and the doctor departed, pronouncing him out of danger for the present, but with exhortations as to future caution, and, having put the invalid to bed, the two old friends by tacit agreement repaired to the library to smoke a parting cigar. For a while they sat in congenial silence, drawn closer together by their night's experience. "Do you remember," said Trevor finally, "the old rooms in Holworthy, and how we three used to talk all night, and see the daylight in together? Poor old Bobby!"

"He has had a close call," said Percival. "He used to be a good sort, fifteen years ago."

"Yes, that's the devil of it. Old friends are old friends, no matter what they do." He watched the rings of smoke fading above his head, and sighed. "I'm glad he told me the

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truth about Jim at last. It puts a different face on things."

"His case comes up to-morrow, I suppose," said Percival.

"I hadn't asked any questions. He has told Clip, I suppose. Has any one seen the woman? Will she oppose it?"

"Fortunately for Jim, she had no legal right to remarry in this State," said Percival. "She has agreed not to appear. I don't anticipate any difficulty."

"After all, it is very easy," said Trevor, half to himself, "and better than feeling that a woman hates to be tied to you."

Percival received this observation incredulously. He had come to consider the Trevors' chances of ultimate happiness as good as most people's. They were young and attractive, and Roy, if not remorseful for what he had done, at least appeared sorry for what had happened. It was inconceivable that he should go to the length of offering Clip her freedom, or that she should avail herself of his mistaken impulse. So the hour of mutual warmth and expansion ticked away, and they parted chilled and wistful of past enthusiasms, while Mr. Floyd, forgiven and convalescent, awoke to a new day.

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When Jim Trevor issued from his private hearing free to commit such further matrimonial indiscretions as his lively fancy should dictate, Percy Townsend, finding him in a chastened spirit, delivered a homily on the evils of idleness, and offered him a position in his office toward which many worthier young gentlemen had cast aspiring eyes. The inconsequence with which the entire connection appeared to regard Jim's unworthy leisure had long occasioned him distress, and though he suspected that he was acting injudiciously, a sense of duty to his family spurred him to give the boy a trial. Jim listened to his proposition with kindly toleration, and even discussed it with Percival, who had sustained him through his late ordeal. "Poor, dear Percy!" he observed. "I don't like to hurt his feelings by refusing, when he means so well, and I fancy I can stand it as long as he can."

"Now, see here, Child," said Percival, "don't you think it is nearly time for you to show the stuff you're made of? This business has cost you something besides experience, and you are not the only one who has had to pay the piper. Of course you will find office-work a grind, but you are capable of sticking to what

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you hate if you know it is the best thing for you, and there is no use in turning your back on a situation because it's awkward. I believe in staying where you belong and fighting it out."

"It doesn't seem to agree with *you* very well," said Jim, candidly. "I must say, I think it's great nonsense your keeping your nose to the grindstone the way you do. It's natural to Percy—he's a sort of machine—but you and I feel our oats, and if we don't bolt occasionally it goes hard with us."

"I should say that this last bolt ought to suffice you for six months or so," Percival observed, and took the youth to the Savarin for lunch, where by much guile he managed to extract from him a promise to give the banking business a faithful trial. Jim's promises were difficult to obtain, but once secured were more reliable than the casual observer might have suspected, and his mentor heaved a sigh of relief as he left him at the street corner, and proceeded to the office of the Townshend Estate, where his own daily trials awaited him. There was the usual pile of correspondence, the usual number of urgent and sanguine persons with schemes to the unfolding of which he listened patiently, if wearily; but at the end of it all was

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the prospect of a breath of spring wind, the stir and swing of a good horse under him, and the welcome on the face of an arrant little coward in a trim habit who had confessed that she dared not ride without him. He had taken great pains with her, supplementing her lessons with instructions of his own, and if she did not feel at home in the saddle, she had at least the satisfaction of knowing that her looks belied her, and that he was proud of his pupil. He despatched his business with alacrity and hurried into his riding clothes, only to wait at the circle for a quarter of an hour before Mrs. Trevor's brougham drew up at the curb, and his ward alighted, surprised as always to find herself late, brimming with new experiences, eager and sparkling.

"I have looked at your girths," he assured her, as he arranged her stirrup, "and I had Thomas take Jolly three times around the Park this morning, so you need not be uneasy even if she does 'dance her ears.'"

"Then please have him buy some crackers at that green stand," Miss Fenwick commanded, "and we will feed the swans."

The buds were swollen on the trees, and there was a strong ripple on the lake beside

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which they dismounted. Easter was late, and the spring was early. The black swans came ferrying toward the shore, harshly voicing their expectant greed, and Effie tossed her bits of biscuit to them. These invariably fell short, and she thrust the remaining pieces into Percival's hands. "You throw them," she said.

They stood for a while watching the swans as they fought for the last morsels, while the wind blew little strands of hair about Effie's face and roughened the brown water. A moment before they had been laughing like two children. Now, as he swung her once more into the saddle, a silence fell upon them, but a silence without discomfort or reserve. For the first time since the afternoon in the china-room she felt the lifting of the shadow that had lain between them. He was himself again—the man she had hated with malice aforethought, respected with reluctance, and whose mere presence to-day so satisfied her that she needed no name for her contentment.

Mrs. Trevor had reached home first, and was awaiting her at the low tea-table. This was usually the hour of many lively confidences, but to-day Effie's tea was untasted, and her hands lay clasped in her lap. "I beg your

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pardon, Clip dear, it's quite sweet enough," she murmured, absently.

Mrs. Trevor rose, and, putting her hand under the girl's chin, turned her face full to the waning light. Effie flushed scarlet, and drooped her dreaming eyes, but the older woman had already read there all that they had to tell. She might not have known once, but now she kissed Effie and left her to her dreams.

CHAPTER XXX

THE END OF THE ROPE

ROBIN and Henry enjoyed their Easter vacation, if the same could not be said of the Percivals, with whom they spent it. They were indisposed toward the end of their visit, their gustatory indiscretions gaining them several days' reprieve from a return to their scholastic duties, and it was with heartfelt relief that Percival, on whom the burden of their entertainment had fallen most heavily, witnessed their departure for Groton.

This deliverance consummated, a specious peace brooded over the house for at least an hour, when a plaintive voice was wafted over the telephone from farther uptown. "Now, Mr. Percival, Clip says I must have overdrawn my allowance, and my bills add up three different ways, and every way I've spent more money than I had, and still, I found nine dollars in my purse this morning. How can that be?"

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"Perhaps I had better go over your accounts with you," he suggested.

"I wish you would, for Rosabelle has charged me for a green hat—as though I would wear such a thing. Come soon," Miss Fenwick commanded, "for I am going to a wedding at four."

The united efforts of the young lady, her guardian, and Mrs. Trevor, were required to unravel the intricacies of her expenditures, and when it finally transpired that the green hat was turquoise blue, and that "P. S., 300" (an item indignantly repudiated by Miss Fenwick) meant "Pig-skin Saddle, \$30,00" the more practical members of the trio remained, somewhat fatigued, in the music-room, while the third, disentangled for a month to come, tripped upstairs to array herself for her expedition.

"Is that haystack yours or Miss Fenwick's?" Percival inquired, surveying the potted plants which since Easter had transformed the room into a conservatory.

"Harry Wingfield sent it to Effie," Mrs. Trevor explained. "She had a cart-load of those things, but your roses occupied the place of honor until they faded."

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“Very nice in her,” said Percival. “By the way, did you know that as Aunt Augusta issued from our portals she was hit squarely on the nose by a bean from a putty-blower? I didn’t tell Robin that at his age I was dying to do it myself, but lacked his splendid audacity. I felt it my duty to lecture him instead, and on the whole it’s gratifying to reflect that there will be no more holidays until June.”

“I know we ought to have had them here, part of the time at least,” she said, remorsefully, “but Roy insisted that I shouldn’t. Don’t you feel terribly guilty when you are forced to shirk things for your own good?”

“On the contrary, I feel much relieved, and so should you,” he assured her. “I rather enjoyed them, but Roy was right. They would have worn you out. I have an inspiration for their summer vacation. I shall have the White Elephant meet them at Boston on the last day of school, provisioned for a long cruise, and put out to sea directly, with orders not to come within sight of land until the beginning of the fall term. If you like the idea, we can put the Child aboard as well. It would be safe and wholesome, though perhaps not so conclusive as a desert island.”

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"You forget that you have made up your party for Bar Harbor in July," she protested.

"Then it must be the other alternative. Next to a small band of competent assassins, which popular prejudice forbids one to maintain, I know of nothing I should prefer to a desert island for people who annoy me," said Percival, pensively. "I have quite a little colony there already, in my hopeful imagination, and it grows apace."

"Who are there?" Mrs. Trevor asked with lively interest.

"Promoters, and people with subscription-lists, and cranks, and reporters, and elocutionists, and responsibilities, and an aunt or cousin or two," said Percival, "and that fellow Gessner."

"I'm sure that during the past fortnight you have been sending me there, in charge of two growing boys," said Mrs. Trevor.

"You? Oh, no, you are on another island, with all the things that ought to have happened and didn't," he confessed. "It's a lovely spot, and quite visible sometimes from the mainland, but there is such a strong current surrounding it that one is wrecked just in sight of the shore."

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"It is attractive only because you are at a distance," she said. "The people who live there don't find it so enchanting. Sometimes they even try to get away from it, and they are wrecked too."

"And yet," he protested, "until a few months ago I believed that there was only happiness there. Surely it will come back."

"Surely Effie's picture would look better on the piano," said his hostess, with a sudden return to ruthless practicality, and rose to experiment with the photograph—a pleasing presentment of the young person in ball-dress, with a rose in her fingers. Having arranged it to her satisfaction, she brought a bowl of flowers from a neighboring table, and placed it before the picture, with the air of a priestess making a votive offering.

"You are awfully fond of her, aren't you?" he exclaimed.

"So are you," said Mrs. Trevor.

"One can't help it," he admitted.

"I am so glad."

"Yes, it is more comfortable all around," he agreed.

"*Comfortable?* What a very unromantic way of putting it."

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"I can see nothing romantic about it," he protested. "I am an uncle to her."

"Do you consider me quite blind?" Mrs. Trevor demanded.

"On that subject you have always failed to display your usual discernment," said Percival. "It is quite humiliating that she has never taken one of her fancies to me, but the fact remains, and as it enables us to keep on good terms I don't complain."

"It is perfectly natural that a girl should make one or two mistakes before she knows her own mind," she said rather hotly.

"I really meant nothing invidious. Of course I know that she will find her bearings sooner or later, and be permanently fond of some man, and I envy him his good fortune."

"Then you won't mind my giving you a word of advice. Don't wait too long. Harry Wingfield——"

"Wingfield is thoroughly straight, and I believe he has a future," he interrupted. "Why shouldn't she have him if she wants him?"

"Because, you foolish man," wailed Mrs. Trevor, "she likes you best."

"Hasn't she refused me twice—and with a

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force and fervor more convincing than flattering?"

"That signifies nothing."

"It signifies that she doesn't want me, and I shall never annoy her again. What have I to offer her except a lot of money, for which she cares nothing? She wants what all good women want—love—and she will never care for any man who can't give it to her."

"You love her now."

"I am devotedly attached to her," said Percival. "I think her the dearest little girl in the world, and if I could go to her and honestly tell her that I loved her, I should be only too glad, but that is what I can never say, to her or any other woman. And now, for God's sake, Clip, don't speak of this to me again. Why can't you be contented to leave things as they are? It may not be an ideal condition, but it's the best we can expect."

"But it isn't the same. Can't you feel yourself how different everything is? We all go on living the same life, seeing each other in the same way, but it isn't as it used to be, and only an outsider could really think so." Her voice was not quite steady, and she looked away from him.

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"That is true enough," he admitted, "but must you make yourself miserable still over what is past and gone? There is no reason why you should not be happy again."

"Except that I don't deserve it," said Mrs. Trevor. "It seems that I am one of those women who can't be good unless they are happy—and I used to think it was so easy!"

"What have you ever done that was really wrong?" he demanded, indignantly; then, seeing her flush and avert her eyes, he cast discretion to the winds, and burst out, "You can't mean that you have been reproaching yourself ever since, because I behaved like a brute to you?"

"You had always treated me perfectly before," she said, still looking away from him. The afternoon sun was flooding the room, but the fragrance of the flowers lay heavily upon their senses, like the air of a church decked for a burial service. "We had been such good friends, and I trusted you. And then—you seemed to place me on a level with *her*—and I couldn't forgive you. But I know now that I must have done something to make you believe that you could."

He had risen, and stood looking down at her.

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“Now I am going to tell you the truth about that night,” he said. “I shall not attempt to make excuses. There are none. But you said something then about my not respecting you, and I see you remember it as well as I do. I can’t explain to you without saying what I have no right to say. You have always been above reproach. I know that you fancied I had stopped caring for you. I thought so myself, or I should never have fallen into the old grooves as I did. When I discovered my mistake, I made my plans to go before I made matters worse. Then the Fenwicks came, and I was thrown with you every day. While it was only your happiness I had to watch, believe me, I had myself in hand, but when I saw how matters stood, I lost my head and made you more trouble. I knew that if I went, I should leave you an added care, which you were not strong enough to assume, and that if I stayed, I ran the risk of offending you again. It was between the devil and the deep sea, and I have had a taste of both in the past few months.”

“I didn’t misunderstand your motive in staying. I know all that you have done for us. We are all deeply grateful—Roy and Jim and I,” she began, formally, but the words died

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on her lips, and all the pretty evasions with which she had been wont to fend off compelling truth failed her in the face of his determination.

“Don’t overestimate my services. I am only one more fool who has been guilty of good intentions,” he said. “I have no right to ask a favor of you, and still, I do. If you are unable to forget my offense, at least don’t torment yourself with the thought that I failed in reverence to you. If you must remember it, remember too that as I loved you when I thought you were to be my wife, with whatever was best in me, I loved you that night.”

“But it is over now!” she implored. “I don’t stand in your way any longer?”

He could not answer her question. In the moment of silence, while she saw the harm she had unwittingly done him, he felt only the shadow of separation, impending and inevitable. The saddest farewells are not those where we see each other no more, but those where the part that was ours is withdrawn from us, the common interest dead. “It means very little,” he said finally, “to say that you would die for a cause when life isn’t particularly dear to you, but I would gladly live

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through that hell again to be just your friend once more. If you are willing to trust me so far, you need not fear that I shall ever forget myself again."

She looked up at him finally, with a curious exaltation in her face—the uplifting of spirit which with her was the herald of any supreme action, right or wrong. She stood on the threshold of expiation, not to him, but to her own conscience. It may have been a species of spiritual hypocrisy, but the self-deception was sincere. "I am not afraid for you," she said. "It is for myself——"

Percival's heart gave a sudden leap, and the color crept into his face. It was true, then. The thing he had long since ceased to hope for had come to him at last. The moment was his, and she, who had never been to him as other women, might be his also. All the considerations which had seemed so weighty, so impossible to ignore, all lesser issues and scruples, were swept away in the flood-tide which this confession had loosed. He had tried until now, with varying success, to live up to certain of his standards; he had held her in such reverence that no thought of danger to her had ever augmented his sense of guilt and disloyalty,

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and now she had descended from her high altar, and stood within reach of his arms, rending the veil of her divinity, and revealing her heart to him—her heart that cried out to his after its years of silence. What were other women to him now, whoever they might be? There was but one in the world for him, and she was his at last.

Her voice came to him above the tumult of his triumph—the little trembling, pathetic voice of the days when he had first loved her. “And so you see why I must trust you to help me—and go.”

The moment was still his if he chose. The selfishness of his passion claimed it, and the disappointment and hunger of the years made their appeal to him, no saint nor hero, but a man of strong feelings, to whom there had come few necessities for the renunciation of self. The temptation which she confessed was the same which had embittered his life for all these weary months, conquered at so great a cost, buried with such pains, and now stronger and more terrible than ever in its resurrection. Why resist it longer? The world was before them. It need entail no shame on her. The thing was done every day. Freedom was hers

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for the asking, and a fresh start at the uncertain game of life. To give *his* life to her, to atone for all that she had suffered, surely was not so base a motive. And was it for this that she had trusted him? She stood in the strong sunlight, still with the look on her face which transfigured a weak and faulty woman into the semblance of an exalted saint. He did not seek to lessen the distance between them. The struggle was ended, this time with no compromise. "Good-by," he said. She did not answer, but her eyes followed him, and so he went away.

Trevor came in later for the daily turn in the Park with which they instinctively sought to publish the excellent terms on which they lived. To the same end they made conversation, cudgeling their brains for safe subjects. "The designs for the new gates came this morning," said the beauty. "I don't care for them, but perhaps you will like them."

"Those Porters have bought an Italian prince for the youngest girl," was Trevor's contribution. "Opinions differ as to the amount they are giving for him, but Italian princes are not as dear as some kinds."

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Meanwhile she was thinking: "You were the first man who came into my life, and I thought you were the only one. I have given you my youth, and all I had to give. We have been married not quite five years, and I have lived out my dreams. I never had any real play-time, and I am tired and alone. I wish I could believe that I was to blame—not simply that you were tired of me—but you were not true, even to her! And now I am untrue in my heart to you, for I have learned what love might have been to me."

Trevor also was thinking, but he voiced his thoughts. "I suppose most married people just get along somehow. Upon my word, the only ones I know who appear satisfied with themselves and with each other are Spriggy and Percy, and Spriggy has a way of taking life by the throat and shaking the best out of it, that in a less fortunate person would be highway robbery."

"She takes only the things she has a right to take," said his wife.

Trevor raised his eyebrows, and returned to his desultory gossip until the victoria stopped before his own door.

"I hate this house!" Clip said suddenly on

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the threshold. "I wish I need never enter it again."

The door swung open, and husband and wife passed into the hall. Contrary to his usual custom he followed her to her own room, and closed the door behind him. "We might as well have it out once for all," he said. "What do you propose to do?"

"I want to go away. I can't bear this any longer."

"I was expecting it," he said, bitterly. "I knew that you had done with me. I was a fool to hope that you would give me another chance."

"Would there be any use in it?" she asked.

"I suppose you will take the boy," said Trevor, and turned his face to the window.

"No—no! I can't take him, and I can't leave him. He is as much yours as mine."

He turned to her again. "Clip! You *will*——?"

"O Roy, you didn't think I meant to go alone?" she sobbed, and held out her arms to him. "Take me away from here. Take me to some place where we can both forget and begin over again!"

CHAPTER XXXI

A NEW LEAF

THE first warning bell of the St. Louis was ringing when Mr. Floyd, bustling about, collided with Wingfield, who, armed with a bottle of choice brandy and a huge box of chocolates, was hastening toward the group collected to wish the Trevors *bon voyage*. Percy Townshend, who for once had managed to tear himself away from his office in the morning, was already fidgeting to go ashore, and had three times dragged Jim away from his small nephew and started him toward the gangway. The rest of the party overwhelmed the travelers with last commissions, though the date for their return was not fixed. "Now see them all," cried Mr. Floyd, severely, "making a perfect packhorse of poor Clip! Just like women! And then they'll all kick over the duty. Why, Mrs. Verney brought over a false neck for her mother-in-law last fall, and the old harpy never paid her what it cost to get it out of the custom-

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house. And that reminds me, Clip, that, if you can get me a giraffe-skin cigarette-case, with the *narrow* gold edges—I don't want them heavy——”

“We shall have to go back on the pilot-boat,” Percy Townshend predicted. “My dear, I believe I will take the elevated. It will get me to the office in better time than the brougham.”

“Then you can give me a lift, Spriggy,” said Mr. Floyd, promptly. “Is the carriage full of vegetables to-day? Well, you needn't laugh, Child. The last time I went anywhere with her, there was a huge box of potatoes and tea and grocers' stuff that she was taking to some of her old paupers on her way to a luncheon, and some white stuff came off on my trousers, and I looked like a sweep.”

A general exodus warned them that Percy's fears were not without foundation, and Effie clung to Mrs. Trevor with tears in her eyes, while Mrs. Townshend kissed her cousins with system and despatch, and started for the gangway. Wingfield lingered, waiting for Effie, and as she finally turned to accompany him, her eyes lighted upon Percival, at whose absence she had marveled in the midst of her grief.

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He hastily made his adieux to the voyagers and followed his ward. "I am going to bring you home, if I may," he said.

They all stood together on the pier while the *St. Louis* got under way. The Trevors lingered by the rail, looking down at them. They seemed to be chatting in a lively and intimate fashion which caused Mr. Floyd, gazing up at them, to observe with an air of great righteousness to Mrs. Townshend: "I believe we have succeeded in averting a scandal. At one time, I own, I thought there was going to be a split, and a new deal all 'round, and it fairly got on my nerves. Of course, everybody does it nowadays, but WE are expected to set an example, and now it seems to have blown over, thanks to me."

Mrs. Townshend transfixed him with a stony eye. She had not been truly cordial to him for some months, though he was at a loss to account for her change of manner. "It seems to me," she remarked, "that the less said about that the better." Nevertheless she expressed her gratification at the evident improvement in her cousins' domestic relations to Percy, who was still fidgeting on the dock, having been persuaded to retain his seat in the brougham. If

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she had not seen fit to impart all she knew to her husband, she did not propose to leave Mr. Floyd in oblivion of his own shortcomings. As the water widened between the steamer and the pier, and the beauty's fluttering handkerchief became a vanishing speck, Percy observed, sentimentally, "It is really a second honeymoon for them."

"It will be a rest for Clip, at all events," Spriggy agreed, as they drove off. "Here, if anything goes wrong, even in the stables, she is obliged to attend to it, for Roy won't, and she isn't a person who can let things slide."

"If Roy would only occupy himself, he would not be forever giving her anxiety," Percy opined. "I think Sidney has spoiled him as much as Clip has. He is always taking troublesome matters off Roy's hands, and yet Sidney is a busy man himself."

"Of course we are all busy, but thank Heaven, *my* husband will write his own letters, and read his own books, and entertain his own friends!" said Mrs. Townshend, fervently. "Roy is mentally and morally lazy, and, however much she may love him, that is always a trial to a woman of Clip's character."

"We all have our failings," Percy observed,

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with a charity quickened by the late satisfactory adjustment of affairs.

“He really takes very little trouble with women,” the fair-minded Spriggy confessed, after a reflective pause, “and I suppose he can’t help being so shockingly good-looking. But the more I see of other men, the more I congratulate myself that I had sense enough to marry you, Percy—and *now* aren’t you glad you didn’t take the elevated?”

“Spriggy thinks that I’m going to make her house my headquarters while Clip is away,” Jim Trevor said to Percival, as he prepared to return to the scene of his labors. “Now it’s very nice there, and all that, but I see Percy down-town every day, and I don’t want to rub it in. When they have an evening at home, they take pencils and draw plans for getting bathtubs into model tenements without wasting space, and I showed them how to manage, and they were as pleased as Punch. It’s positively pathetic to see how hard they work trying to make it convenient for people to be clean. And then Kendal drops in, and they are all strenuous together, and Percy tells what he would do if he were mayor. This earnestness *I* call positively ill-bred.”

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"It's inartistic, I admit," said Percival, "but you can't very well avoid it nowadays. It's in the air. Sometimes I even suspect myself of harboring it."

"Well, at least you have the decency to conceal it," said Jim. "That's why I'm going to ask you if you really wanted me when you told Clip you expected me. Because I know I'm better off with you than anywhere else."

"I don't think it's very nice in you to make fun of them," said Miss Fenwick, who, not appreciating her guardian's generosity to Wingfield, had joined the other group. "Next to Clip, there is no one I admire as much as Spriggy. I should like to be a philanthropist myself."

"You haven't money enough," said Archie with fraternal frankness.

"And I'm not clever enough. I know it," Effie admitted.

"My dear girl, promise me that you will do nothing rash," Jim protested. "Give me your word that at least it won't be a college settlement."

Effie relished ridicule as little as most people, and was grateful to Percival for hurrying her into the brougham. If Harry Wingfield

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did not share her sentiments, he was too nice a young man to exhibit his dismay at seeing her borne away by the person whom he regarded as his most formidable rival. Instead he carried Archie off to his studio, where the youth discoursed feelingly of the overwhelming nature of his scholastic labors, and of his apprehensions lest he should fail to pass his finals once more.

Meanwhile Effie leaned back against the cushions with a feeling of thankfulness that she had escaped from Wingfield at what experience had taught her was likely to be a critical moment, mitigated by a forlorn sense of loss. "When Clip is here I don't feel it," she said to Percival as they were jolted across the car-tracks, "but when she goes, I realize that I have no home."

The little speech hurt him, though not in the same way in which it would have wounded him a few weeks earlier. He had dreaded the necessary farewells, not liking to create remark by his absence, nor to reopen wounds that were still too recent to be tampered with, but as he had watched the water widen between him and the woman who for years had been the most potent influence in his life, he

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was conscious, through the wrench of parting, of relief that the obsession was over at last, and that, whatever the struggle might have cost, he was his own man again. Until a few weeks ago he could have echoed Effie's words. Now he felt called upon to protest against them. "I suppose you can't regard a place as home simply because the house seems empty after you are gone," he said, "but at least you know how glad we are to have you back again."

Effie shook her head mournfully. "You think I don't understand what a trouble we have been to you," she said. "And I didn't, at first. I was only glad at getting away from Aunt Katherine, and being with Clip, and having a good time. I thought all the time of what people were going to do for me, and never of what I ought to do for them. You were going away, and we prevented you. Your hands were full already, and we were thrust upon you. I must have known it in my heart if I had been sensible, but I never realized it until that day—that dreadful day in the china-room."

"I can't wonder that you don't care to come back to us," said Percival, with a stab of retrospective remorse. There had so undeniably been a time when he had considered the Fen-

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wicks a burden, that any reference to his former sentiments filled him with discomfort. He would have liked to justify himself in Effie's eyes, to make a clean breast of the exact part she had played in his embarrassments, but this was so clearly impossible that he did not attempt to explain at all. Whatever she thought, she must continue to think. He could say nothing more.

"You mustn't think that I don't want to come," Effie protested. "Only I feel that it would be better if we went back to Aunt Katherine."

"I doubt if you are any happier with her than you are even here," said Percival.

"I don't expect to be happy. Perhaps, though, now that I know it isn't always her fault, we shall get along better," she suggested.

"I suppose you have an idea that it is your duty," said Percival, disapprovingly; "though why you should go where you know you will be miserable is a mystery to me."

"You would do it yourself. Do you suppose I don't know?" Effie demanded. "You have given up everything you wanted to do, and done everything that you hated. You thought I didn't see anything, but I have known

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for ever so long, and now I can't have it on my conscience any longer."

"But, my dear child, it isn't a burden to me now," he interrupted, vehemently. "If you had said this to me six months ago, I could not honestly have denied it. It seemed to me as though the fates had conspired to keep me in a situation that had become unbearable to me. I had been disappointed in everything that I believed worth while, and I was not man enough to keep it to myself, so I hurt you too. But that is over now, thank God, and so is my delusion that I had a divine right to cry for the moon. I have come to the conclusion that my happiness isn't the end for which the world was created, and that if I can't have what I like, I must like what I have. I have grown so accustomed to my harness that I should be at a loss without it. These things are my business, and I would not be willing now to hand them over to any one else, unless you were dissatisfied with my management of your part of them. And as for you—Effie, I thought you knew how I feel about you now!"

But Effie was unable to forget her own part in the uncongenial weight which he had carried for so long. She would go away, with the chil-

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dren. She would learn to manage her own affairs. So much, at least, she could spare him. He had not realized how he had looked forward to her return until he saw her firmly persisting in her departure.

Mrs. Percival innocently augmented his disappointment by the readiness with which she fell in with Effie's plans. After prettily bewailing the approaching separation, she sought her son in private, and with great complacency remarked, "Since the dear children *are* going, I can join your Aunt Emmy in Paris, and have Chéri treat my hair. It is falling out by the handful, and Theresa has been imploring me for six months to put myself into his hands. Of course, no complaint passed my lips as long as it seemed best to have them here, but I have spent a most upsetting year, and it will be a great relief not to be obliged to open The Cedars this summer. The Brents will be at Cowes in August, and you might meet us at Boulogne with the yacht and join them there. I hate being ill on a Channel steamer."

"The children were counting on spending part of the summer in Fortmounthouse," Percival objected.

"Well, no doubt you can engage some suit-

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able person to take charge of them there," his mother replied. "I should not blame Mrs. Foster if she found them more than she cared to manage. They have worn both Clip and me to shadows, and it is only fair that their own people should take a turn at them. The truth is, no house is big enough for more than one family. I am not breathing a word against them. Effie is a dear child, and has done us great credit, and if Archie isn't at New Haven next winter he never will be, but I feel that I have earned a rest."

So it happened that when Miss Fenwick and Percival parted on the train which was to bear her on the first of a round of visits in which she hoped to find solace for her ultimate sojourn with Mrs. Foster, each was secretly hurt at the unconcern which the other displayed. Now that the decisive step was taken, Effie felt herself a very Ishmael, and something swelled in her throat as she reflected on what she was leaving. She was doing the right thing, and nothing should induce her now to swerve from her course. Only, they might have cared a little more.

CHAPTER XXXII

“ GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THIS ”

“ A LUXURIOUS beggar who has been doing Norway in his own yacht all summer can't indulge in those sensations of conscious virtue in which I am reveling at present,” said Jim Trevor. “ Two things have sustained me during the past five months—the prospect of tasting for the first time the well-earned repose of the industrious journeyman, and Percy's countenance of chronic surprise when I turned up at the office every morning. They all find it so amazing that I have actually stuck to it! ”

“ I owe you a lifelong gratitude for enabling me once to say ‘ I told you so! ’ to Percy,” said Percival.

It was late in September, and a three days' storm had drenched all Fortmounthouse into untimely somberness. A damp, whining wind was stripping the long yellow leaves from the willows around the ugly fountain, now partially dismantled, and the rain-soaked earth

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lay bare in patches, encumbered with all the unsightly paraphernalia of excavation and construction.

“What on earth are you doing here?” Jim demanded, peering with interest into the trench that yawned at his feet, already partly floored with stone, and littered with blocks of masonry.

“I have detested that fountain from my earliest childhood,” said Percival, “and when they ruined the lawns in rebuilding the stables, I thought I would finish the good work and have a swimming-pool made here instead. They have already carted away two very objectionable small mermaids, and I trust that Triton may go next.”

“It’s jolly deep,” Jim commented. “Won’t it be a good thing next summer? They had to stop work, I suppose, on account of the rain. There is water enough now in that lower end to swim in.”

“It isn’t as deep as it looks. You see, they had just lowered the biggest blocks of stone in there when this storm began.” Percival picked up a chip of granite and aimed it at the deepest part of the muddy water. “Didn’t you hear it strike then? That is the heaviest block

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of all, and it isn't more than two inches from the surface."

Jim also flung a few experimental stones, then resumed his contemplative attitude, and stood with feet wide apart, puffing at his pipe, the picture of contentment against the gloomy landscape. "You'd better believe I'm glad to be here with you in this blessed place once more!" he said. "I told Percy I would wait and take my vacation when you came home. Summer in town wasn't half as bad as I always thought it would be, but all this is much better. I believe virtue is an acquired taste, but when you've once got it— Hello! What's that?"

Percival turned sharply. In the gravel walk, a little distance away, stood the square, heavily built figure of a middle-aged man, patient, deprecating, but insistent. He groaned under his breath to Jim, "I have not been back a week, and here he is again—my Old Man of the Sea."

The man advanced, twisting his soft hat in his hands, and with a look on his broad face of mingled doggedness and appeal. "Welcome home, Mr. Percival," he said. "I saw your arrival in the paper, and I went at once to your office, but they told me you were here. I hope

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you see your way clear about that nomination. I was talking only yesterday to a gentleman whose name I'm not at liberty to mention, but he knows the ropes, and he says that if you'll only use your influence for my nomination, my election would be a dead certainty.”

“I have no political influence,” said Percival.

“So they all say,” Gessner replied in a confidential tone, “but I know that you can get me that seat in Congress if you choose.”

“My dear man, you might as well ask me for the throne of Russia,” said Percival.

“I've given you all the time I can,” Gessner urged. “I ought to be making my canvass now.”

“Why won't you set your head on something that I *could* do for you?” Percival asked, wearily.

Gessner still stood twisting his hat, a pathetic, shuffling figure. “I will give you until this evening,” he said, finally.

“Very well,” said Percival. “Think it over and see if there isn't something else that would do just as well.” Gessner turned, and walked slowly down the road, shaking his head.

“Is this the sort of thing you have been

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standing from that fellow?" Jim demanded. "Why, he's crazy. He ought not to be at large."

"He was not like this at first," said Percival. "He seemed sane enough when I first knew him. I suppose he has been brooding over this matter until he really believes that I have robbed him of his birthright, and that I am bound to make him any reparation he demands. And sometimes I think he may be right."

"Nonsense!" said Jim. "What claim can he possibly have on you? What is yours is yours. Hasn't a man a right to his own life? I know I have a right to mine, and I propose to take it, too, and not worry too much about other people. They wouldn't worry about me. Would your Old Man of the Sea stand any such preposterous rubbish from you, if your places were reversed, as you do from him? You know very well that he'd call in the police."

"He can't realize that he is doing anything unreasonable," said Percival. "That is the worst of it."

"Well, it's a pretty bad old world," Jim observed, philosophically, "but I like it, such as it is, and I shall take as good care as possible that it treats me well in return."

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Percival believed him. The Trevors had always wrested their desires red-handed from fate—all save one, a pathetic little figure now, lonely and resolute, already fading from the scene it had dominated. The gates of Fortmounthouse were still locked, and even their opening could not unseal the book of vain desire.

As they rose from the dinner-table that evening, Jim reverted to the unwelcome subject. “It is almost time for your future congressman. What are you going to do with him?”

Percival laughed and groaned. “I suppose it really isn’t safe to leave him at large,” he admitted. “His parting remark sounded like an ultimatum, and if he should become convinced that it is beyond my power to do what he wants, he may do himself an injury. I believe I will telephone the doctor to come over and take a look at him while he is here.”

“Well, I’m going outside to see what the weather is doing,” said Jim.

His host called after him: “I’ll join you as soon as I have finished at the telephone.”

It had stopped raining, and the wind was scouring the sky. Little rifts in the clouds fit-

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fully disclosed the horn of the new moon, but the darkness of the shrubbery rendered excursions on the turf a hazardous experiment, and Jim kept to the gravel path which led to the swimming-pool. There, as he stood by the coping listening for Percival, the clouds parted to reveal the whole of the slender crescent, and he saw Gessner's figure, heavy, patient, unmistakable, on the edge of the excavation.

"I say, I wouldn't walk there if I were you," he called out to him. "Those wet leaves are deuced slippery, and you're likely to fall."

"I am not walking," said Gessner.

"Then what the mischief *are* you doing?" Jim demanded.

"Only waiting."

"What is that in your hand?" the boy asked with sudden intuition.

The man stepped backward, with one arm upraised, as if to defend himself, and paused again as Percival's step came crunching nearer on the wet gravel. Then his hand went back to his coat, and Jim's suspicion became a certainty. He sprang on the other, pinioning him and searching him at once, and his fingers clutched on what he had expected to find. With his strong young hands he wrenched it from

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Gessner's grasp and flung it away from him, and it went splashing into the pool. Gessner, freed for a moment, seized him about the waist, and they grappled in the dark, the ground oozing and slipping under their feet. Unwieldy and soft as the older man appeared, he was very heavy, and his weight bore always toward the edge. It was no small matter to hold him back, and even with the joy of combat rising in his blood, the boy began to realize that it was no longer a question of Percival's life, but of his own. The exaltation of peril filled him. It seemed to him that life could hold no better moment than this, when he was fighting for it hand to hand. Then, suddenly, the edge yielded to the dragging weight, and there was rushing space, and a crash on the masonry beneath.

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Mrs. Townshend, smothering with resolute piety the outcry of rebellious nature, knelt beside the cot on which her young cousin lay, as the doctors had left him. That he was aware of her presence she knew, for his eyes were fixed on her with something more than the weariness of mortal struggle, and once or twice he had opened his lips and closed them suddenly again, as though he feared to ask the

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question that trembled there. Finally he nerved himself by a supreme effort to speak: "Are they finished with me?"

"Yes, dear, they won't trouble you any more."

"Spriggy—if it's simply death, I'm not afraid—but it can't be that I must live like this?"

She sobbed outright. "Oh, Jim, it's simply death."

He tried to move his hand toward hers. "That's all right," he said.

"We must believe that it is right. We *must* see it, for there is no other way," she insisted with piteous determination. It was her duty to accept the fact that this boy, yesterday full of the true genius for living that makes good and evil alike worth while, was going out with the twilight, a stranger and alone, to face the eternal mystery. "But, oh, to have it come like this—when you were doing so well!—when we were beginning to be so proud of you!"

"Never mind, Spriggy dear," said Jim, consolingly. "It wouldn't have lasted."

CHAPTER XXXIII

OUT OF THE DEPTHS

“EXTRA! Extra! Double tragedy at Fort-mounthouse!” the newsboys were crying in the streets of New Haven, and Archie Fenwick stood in the middle of his study, with the paper crushed in his hand, raging against accomplished destiny. Before this clamor of familiar names had persistently claimed his notice, he had been proudly displaying his new quarters to his sister, and meeting his aunt’s charges of extravagance with the lofty tolerance of a new-fledged collegian. Now, in his grief and resentment, he was an impotent child, defying the inevitable. “I can’t believe it. I *won’t* believe it,” he cried. “It’s one of their trumped-up lies. Why, I wrote to him only yesterday.”

His aunt strove to console him. Our everyday life offers so few opportunities for the sort of heroism that kindles the imagination that the world is eager to apotheosize those who

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chance to achieve it, and Mrs. Foster, who had esteemed Jim lightly enough living, was dazzled like the rest by the luster of his departure. For Gessner, formerly the object of newspaper sentimentality, there were now only objurgations which his death could not soften. His intended victim cut but a sorry figure in the tragedy. It was Jim—all Jim!

“I always felt that he would come to no ordinary end,” Mrs. Foster pronounced finally, “but I never dreamed that it would be such a noble one. Come, Effie, dry your eyes. After all, we should be thankful that the villain didn’t succeed in assassinating Mr. Percival. Whatever the sacrifice may have been, we must remember that his is the more valuable life of the two.”

“And how valuable do you suppose it is to him *now*?” Effie cried. “You all think of nothing but Jim—but it is all over for him now, and it lasted only a little while. How would you feel if you were the one who had to accept such a sacrifice? How would you bear his dying the death that was meant for you?” She turned even upon her beloved Archie, in the ferocity of her prescience. Her whole soul blazed with it; her heart was bursting with a

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very anguish of sympathy. A little, futile person yesterday, and perhaps again to-morrow, to-day she rose to the level of her utmost possibilities.

"I am going to Fortmounthouse," she said. "You may go with me, Aunt Katherine, or I will go alone, but there is no use in your trying to stop me." Her determination carried all before it, even Mrs. Foster's opposition, which fell upon deaf ears, and so, vainly protesting, the good lady prepared for the journey.

The Townshends were in possession at The Cedars, receiving the condolences of a large family connection, reading and answering telegrams, filling the rôle of chief mourners in the absence of the next of kin. Percy was in his element, but Spriggy, while retaining her capacity for action, felt herself confronted by a situation with which she was unable to cope. If up to this time she had been a trifle prone to regard herself in the light of a special Providence, the inadequacy of her efforts to adjust Percival's mind to a proper resignation baffled and humiliated her, and she finally broke down on Effie's arrival, and sobbed on her shoulder. "I don't know what to say to him," she confessed. "I've tried everything, and it is of no

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use. He can't let himself go. I believe I have been on more confidential terms with him than any living being, but he can't show his heart even to me. I've seen him take the most knock-down blows when nobody would have suspected that he cared—you know his way. But I've never seen him like this, and it frightens me. It isn't that he makes any fuss—it would be more human if he would. He's perfectly quiet—but when you see him you will know what I mean. It is killing him."

She dried her eyes conclusively, and went into the next room to receive Mrs. Foster. Effie stood alone by the grate, in which a wood fire was blazing. The curtains were drawn, for the windows looked out on the scene of the disaster, and already there were gaps in the foliage of the trees which hid the half-completed pool from the house. Outside it was very still and bright and cold, and the yellow autumn sunshine filtered into the room even through the draperies. Mrs. Townshend had closed the door behind her, and only a monotonous murmur of voices came from the other side. Confronted by the actual spectacle of a man dumb in the clutch of a great grief, she might feel her limitations, but out of his pres-

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ence she could find the same relief in fluent emotionality which her husband derived from solemn platitudes. Percival, who had schooled himself to subordinate his emotions to the requirements of convention, and to consider self-revelation almost an indecency, could no more wring comforting expression from his affliction than he could wring blood from a stone. There are some depths of the soul to which we descend shuddering and alone, and will have no companion to hold the light. The debt, incurred without his knowledge, could never be repaid. His life had been purchased by his friend's, and through all the coming years this obligation was his, to endure and to conceal. It is but an ill-bred Tragedy that flaunts herself in public. Why, when our friends considerately present to us tranquil countenances, should we seek to peer and pry behind the mask for the haggard, tear-stained face it may hide? So the mask was down when Percival entered the room, and Effie felt her sympathy beating vainly against the aloofness of this dignity and despair. "This is very good in you," he said. She wondered to how many others he had been forced to make the same set speech already, and how he could endure this ghastly repetition of condolences

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from people who, in their hearts, were more inclined to congratulate him. She had yet to learn for what rough usage the human machine is built.

“How can you bear it?” she cried.

“What else can I do?” he asked, and could say no more. He had not relinquished her hands, and she could feel his grasp tighten upon them. His armor of self-possession was for other people, not for her.

“Oh, don’t think it was so much. It is all past for him now,” she said, “and the worst part is left for you. He loved you, and it wasn’t hard for him. He did it without a thought, as you would have done in his place. Why, I am a coward and love my life, and yet I would have been glad to do as he did—for you!”

He held her at arm’s length, startled out of his lethargy. “Effie,” he cried, “do you know what you are saying?”

“I only know,” she sobbed, “that if you let this break your heart, mine will break too.”

“My dear love, stay with me then,” said Percival, and took her into his arms.

“You must never remember, though, how I threw myself at your head,” she said presently. Her great moment was past and her mission

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accomplished. She was once more the consoled instead of the consoler, and sat comfortably asserting those claims which for a long time it had been his pleasure and diversion to recognize. She so filled the present that every other consideration receded momentarily into obscurity.

“You blessed little goose,” said Percival, “you knew I loved you.”

“I know I am a goose,” she admitted, “but about one thing I was never half as silly as you were. I knew about you, and you never even guessed about me.”

“Guessed what?”

“That I’ve loved you for ages and ages,” she confessed, and hid her face on his shoulder.

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THE END

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